



## **State of the City, 2025**

Dear Citizens of Maumelle,

It is an honor to share my seventh State of the City address.

Seven years. That's seven years of progress, challenges, learning opportunities, growth, and—most importantly—people. Because if there's one thing that defines Maumelle, it's the people who make this city what it is.

This year is especially meaningful. Maumelle continues to grow strategically, and we have accomplished so much together. And once again—as we have for 16 years—we were named Arkansas's Volunteer Community of the Year by Engage Arkansas. What made this year special was that while in the past there have been multiple winners who achieved certain criteria, the award now categorizes the awards and there is a single, overall winner that represents the best city in the state. *And that city... was Maumelle!* The award is more than a pretty plaque. It's more than a sign along the side of the road when you enter town. It's a reflection of who we are. It's the neighbor who steps up when someone is in need, the business owner who gives back, the churches and civic organizations that seek out opportunities to serve, and the volunteers who dedicate their time to making Maumelle better every single day.

In this letter I share why the State of the City is strong and reflect on what we've achieved in 2024. And if the past is any indication of the future, the future of Maumelle is bright.

### **Mayor's office**

In 2024, the Mayor's office coordinated Maumelle's readiness initiative for the April 8 total solar eclipse, ensuring that the city's residents and visitors were safe and had an opportunity to celebrate the once-in-a-lifetime experience together at the beautiful Lake Willastein. I remember playfully teasing former Mayor Mike Watson about how it took me only five years to bring a total solar eclipse to Maumelle, but he hadn't brought any in his entire twelve years as Mayor. But seriously, the moment of totality when the moon completely cut off the Sun's light is something that I will never forget. While the turnout of visitors from outside of Maumelle may have been fewer than the experts advised, the event highlighted our city's preparedness, the dedication of our first responders, and the community's willingness to help partner, volunteer, and attend new events at Lake Willastein. Aside from the great memories, perhaps the most lasting impact were the lessons we learned and could apply as we co-sponsored, along with the Maumelle Area Chamber of Commerce, a Food Truck Festival at Lake Willastein later in the Fall.

Our office also coordinated the building of pickleball courts, a project initiated during COVID-19 in response to community interest. We kicked it off with a much-anticipated grand opening, with enthusiastic players jumping on the courts as soon as the ribbon was cut. Strategically located behind the Jess Odom Community Center, the improvements beautified an underutilized piece of city property, and players of all skill levels frequented the courts.



Fun fact: I was just notified this week that the Maumelle Pickleball Courts Received an excellence in engineering award from ACEC for it's structural systems.

In line with the beautification efforts I've long pushed, we enhanced holiday lighting throughout the city and organized multiple events throughout December, attracting thousands of residents and visitors. A highlight for my boys was the Whimsical Trail at Lake Willastein, which featured illuminated animal figures, including a swan in memory of Romeo. We also coordinated the community lights contest—A Very Merry Maumelle House Decorating Competition—with more participants than ever. Driving around town with the judging panel to see our citizens' efforts to bring Christmas joy to others always puts me in the holiday spirit.

Our office advanced plans for Gateway Park. At the recent groundbreaking, we commenced the construction by demolishing the old building that housed the former courts, fire, and police stations.

The new park – at the corner of Millwood and Maumelle Boulevard, will offer space for food trucks, a farmers market, green areas, and a small stage for community events. It also serves as a trailhead for the future greenway as it heads down the soon-to-be-improved Club Manor corridor.

Speaking of trails, we started implementing recommendations from our master bicycle and pedestrian plan: Engineering began on the Woodland Drive trail extension, including intersection improvements at Woodland and Odom North; improvements were made to trails at Lake Willastein, though there are still more improvements needed; custom Maumelle bike racks were ordered; and planning began on, and funding was dedicated for, safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists using Arnold Palmer.

For several years now, I've mentioned the need for a rate study to examine the sanitation department's rates. The old rates were set way back in 2006, and the City has struggled to provide the same level of service with 18 years of inflation. As expected, the study recommended a rate increase, and the City Council adopted a rate increase of \$7.63 that went into effect on January 1, 2025.

Our team made significant strides in community engagement. On Facebook, our reach grew by more than 140%, with interactions and visits seeing impressive increases of more than 50%. Notably, the "Very Merry Maumelle Holiday " photo album garnered over 31,000 views, and the Maumelle First Food Truck Festival video had nearly 23,000 views.

The city received recognition at the Arkansas Municipal League's winter conference with two Trendsetter Awards, including one for education and workforce development and an honorable mention in tourism development. Traditional media also played a key role, with Maumelle featured in 20 stories across local TV outlets.

### **City Attorney**

The purpose of the City Attorney's office is clear: to protect the city's interests, support its goals, and safeguard the rights of its citizens.

In 2024, City Attorney Andrew Thornton demonstrated his commitment to the city. He was on call 24/7, ready to assist the Maumelle Police Department and other city personnel with legal questions and challenges.

The City Attorney prosecutes all misdemeanors and traffic and ordinance violations in Maumelle District Court. He provided sound legal advice to the Maumelle City Council, the Planning Commission, the Civil Service Commission, and city employees.

He played an integral role in preparing most of the ordinances and resolutions considered by the City Council in 2024. Beyond that, Mr. Thornton remained actively involved in the city's daily operations, providing legal counsel on various issues—from code enforcement and planning to contracts, personnel, and policy matters. His efforts ensure that the city operates smoothly and efficiently and complies with the law.

### **City Clerk/Treasurer**

City Clerk/Treasurer Tina Timmons made significant advancements in 2024, including upgrading computers, migrating to Microsoft 365 Government, and enhancing cybersecurity with multi-factor authentication and infrastructure improvements citywide. Server consolidation reduced costs and improved efficiency, while upgraded firewalls and backup solutions strengthened data security.

Beyond technology, the office expanded custodial responsibilities to include City Hall landscaping and ensured cost-effective supply procurement. The clerk's office processed 178 business licenses and implemented a new fee under Ordinance 1108, benefiting the Police and Fire Departments.

Record retention and organization continues to be a primary focus of the Clerk's office. Hundreds of records were added to the archives via electronic storage. Research efforts will continue in order to keep up with efficient ways to protect and maintain electronic files.

Looking ahead, the City Clerk/Treasurer intends to bring more technology to the administrative offices to help increase and maintain efficiency of services for our citizens.

### **Maumelle District Court**

Judge Rita Bailey presides over all criminal, traffic, and ordinance violations filed in Maumelle District Court, as well as civil and small-claims cases. Last year, 1,739 cases were filed

in Maumelle District Court by the city's police, code enforcement, and animal control officers as well as 6 cases that were filed by the Arkansas State Police. Judge Bailey also presided over 46 civil and small-claims cases.

The court clerk's office provides support to members of the public and attorneys by aiding in the filing of documents with the court, facilitating access to court records, and offering assistance to defendants during court proceedings every Tuesday afternoon.

### **The Finance Department**

The Finance Department, under Beatriz Sousa's leadership, saw positive strides in 2024. From a revenue standpoint, property tax collections were higher than 2023, contributing to an overall revenue increase of \$1.3 million above last year's levels. However, sales taxes came in slightly below expectations; a trend seen across the state

On the expenditure side, all departments remained within their revised 2024 budgets. Key areas of increased spending included the police and fire departments, driven primarily by salary and benefit adjustments.

At the end of the year, the total general fund balance stood at \$7.5 million, with \$345,000 earmarked for purchase orders, resulting in a net fund balance of \$7.2 million.

I'm proud to say that the City is completely caught up on audits and on pace to complete the 2024 audit and submit it to the City Council on time. Both the 2022 and 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports were issued and presented to the City Council last year.

### **Maumelle Fire Department**

Under the leadership of Chief Beau Buford, the Maumelle Fire Department responded to 2,250 incidents in 2024, marking the second-highest total in the department's history and a 29 % increase over the past five years. Emergency medical services accounted for 62 % of those calls, and the department also responded to 57 fires, 18 of which were building fires.

Last year, the City Council approved three new firefighter positions, and by the end of the year, all but one position had been filled. The department bid farewell to two retirees and welcomed three new paramedics.

The department (and other city agencies) prepared for and responded to the April 8 solar eclipse. While the event did not require overwhelming services, I'm proud that the Fire Department used this as an opportunity to prepare for potential emergencies by activating the Emergency Operations Center, enhancing and updating emergency procedures, and conducting drills.



In 2024, the Fire Department increased its capabilities to respond effectively to medical emergencies. In addition to adding three new paramedics, it purchased its first electronic extrication tools, which are already being used successfully in vehicle extrications. Additionally, a new cardiac monitor was added to the fleet, providing faster and more robust responses for heart-related medical emergencies.

Additionally, the department acquired 25 sets of personal protective equipment through capital funds and a Firehouse Subs grant.

The final major project in 2024 was upgrading the fire station alerting system and dispatch, which is now integrated with the consolidated Public Safety Answering Point at the North Little Rock/Maumelle Dispatch Center. After three years of planning, the system went live on January 2, 2025. This massive undertaking involved the offices of the Mayor, City Attorney, Human Resources, Fire Department, and the Police Department.

Speaking of the police department...

### **Maumelle Police Department**

The Maumelle Police Department, led by Chief Cory Pickard, has built a strong relationship with our community. When fully staffed, the department consists of 43 officers and four civilians.

The department is organized into four divisions: The Support Division includes Building, Grounds, and Fleet maintenance, and Accreditations. While Communications was part of this division, it was eliminated January 2nd, 2025, due to the consolidation with North Little Rock.

The Community Relations Division includes the Public Information Officer, the School Resource Officer program, Training, and Internal Affairs. The Investigative Division focuses on general crimes and special investigations, and the Patrol Division consists of four patrol squads, including one K-9 officer.

In 2024, the department welcomed three new officers and remained committed to professional development. Officers participated in advanced training programs, including specialized courses in law enforcement supervision and school resource officer leadership. This ongoing education enhances the department's ability to effectively serve and protect the community. Collectively, the Maumelle Police Department logged more than 4,000 training hours throughout the year, reinforcing its dedication to excellence in public safety.

In 2024, we saw some pretty big decreases in crime, which makes Maumelle an even safer City to live in that we already were. Officers responded to 13,820 calls for service, which was down 13% from 2023. Aggravated assaults decreased 20% to 20, and robberies decreased 66%, with only one incident reported. Property crimes decreased 26%, with 187 reported incidents.

Vehicle thefts were down one to 13, and overall larceny cases dropped 33% to 145. These reductions continue to keep Maumelle well below state crime levels.

The department issued 1,559 citations and 5,641 written warnings and reported seven vehicle pursuits. They investigated 348 traffic collisions, an increase from 310 in 2023. The most frequent accident sites were the intersections of Hwy 365 and Frontier Drive (near Waffle House), Country Club Parkway and Hwy 100, Odom South and Hwy 100, and Audubon Drive/Montpellier and Hwy 100. The recurring theme for these locations is that they all involve Maumelle Boulevard, which is why we partnered with North Little Rock and Metroplan to request a joint corridor study of Maumelle Boulevard from I-40 all the way to 430.

Community policing remains one of the Department's primary philosophies. In 2024, officers participated in local blood drives, continued partnerships to assist citizens in need, worked with Walmart on the "Shop with a Cop" program for holiday gifts, and supported Arkansas Special Olympics.

### **Human Resources Department**

Under the leadership of Director Doreen Mattes, the HR department made significant strides to enhance efficiency and user experience for City employees by fine-tuning select modules of our HR software.

The HR department processed 538 non-uniform and 207 uniform applications and administered 61 written entry exams for the police and fire departments. In total, 102 new full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees were onboarded throughout the year.

The turnover rate for 2024 increased to 24%, compared to 8% in 2023, with 35 voluntary separations and 17 involuntary separations.

The HR department had great success with its 2024 wellness initiative. Twenty-eight employees participated in five wellness programs, and 72 employees received wellness equipment, including pickleball gear and hydration supplies. The wellness program was funded by Cigna, which helps us encourage our workforce's overall health and well-being.

### **Planning and Permits**

In 2024, the Department of Planning and Permits, led by Scott Grummer, made significant strides in managing growth, ensuring compliance, and maintaining the integrity of our city's development.

The department processed two rezonings and five conditional use permits, ensuring responsible land use and development. Three land use amendments were approved, covering nearly 400 acres citywide. Our subdivision activity remained strong with 16 submittals, including significant projects like Stony Mountain and The Reserve. Several key code amendments were

enacted to improve site plan timelines, commercial outdoor recreation regulations, and storm drainage requirements. The city issued 88 new residential construction permits, including townhomes, with a median home size of just under 2,400 sq. ft. and a median value of \$460,000.

Commercial growth remained steady, with the opening of new businesses such as Take 5 Oil, Southern Heaux, Venue 10 Event Center, and First Service Bank. A total of 2,456 permits were issued across residential, commercial, and industrial sectors, generating more than \$546,000 in revenue.

Our Code Enforcement Division was active, issuing over 730 Notices of Violation and overseeing 1,600 roofing permits. Common violations included unpermitted work, high grass, and illegal boat/trailer parking. The department addressed 750 code violations, ensuring neighborhood safety and compliance.

### **Senior Services**

Under Director Nicole Vogler, the Department of Senior Services had a record-breaking year in 2024. More than 1,750 members logged almost 93,000 visits to the Center on the Lake. Free transportation to medical appointments and grocery stores reached almost 8,350 trips, and volunteers contributed an impressive 19,150 hours.

Average daily attendance at the Center increased to 376 member visits, 34 transportation trips, and 78 volunteer hours each workday. The Center's staff and volunteers work together to offer a range of events, activities, meals, transportation services, and recreational opportunities for Maumelle's senior population.

I want to give a heartfelt Thank you to our volunteers. We couldn't provide the level of services for seniors that we do without your help.

The Senior Services staff improved communication through social media, text messages, emails, flyers, and bi-monthly newsletters. They also implemented cloud-based software that sent reminders for transportation, events, volunteer schedules, and weather-related updates to their members.

In 2024, the Center formed partnerships that expanded opportunities for its members. For example, Samaritan's Feet provided 300 seniors with orthopedic shoes, gift bags, and boxed lunches. Local partners also sponsored the inaugural Senior Prom and events such as Fresh Smoothie Bars, Ice Cream Socials, Bingo Nights, a Talent Show, and a Members' Award Show. Thanks to these partnerships, the Center saw nearly 20,000 more visits than the previous year.

Based on member feedback, fitness equipment was relocated, and a wall was removed to create space for larger group activities like dulcimer, watercolor, and fitness classes. These changes have better aligned the Center with members' needs and preferences.

## **Parks and Recreation**

The Parks and Recreation Department, led by Phillip Raborn, had its busiest year on record. At the Jess Odom Community Center, memberships and daily fee utilization increased by 6% compared to 2023. Rentals of the center's indoor facilities increased by 20%. And use of the Aquatic Center increased significantly, with more people purchasing memberships and paying for daily visits.

The Parks Department assumed rental responsibility of Park on the River in October of 2024. Staff cleaned, painted, and installed air conditioning, ceiling fans, an ice machine, and door locks to prepare it for citizen use. Parks also hosted the grand opening celebration of the all-inclusive playground, which allows children of all abilities to play together.

Parks staff continued to do what they do best. All the youth summer camps operated at full capacity, and the Maumelle Marlins Swim team had another successful season. We had the biggest Christmas parade we have had in a long time. The entries keep getting better and better each year.

Last year, the Maumelle Youth Council participated Halloween Haunted House at the Community Center and held their Mums fundraiser. Between 500 and 600 kids "*hunted*" for 6,000 eggs across three soccer fields at the City's annual Easter Egg hunt, and two Youth Council students visited Washington D.C., where they met with Arkansas politicians and I had the chance to have dinner with them.

The Daddy-Daughter Valentine Dance and Mother-Son Superhero Dance were big hits as usual. Parks & Rec also held fishing derbies, youth and adult basketball leagues, summer camps, the Puppy Pool Party, swim lessons, and water aerobics.

Of course, Parks helped with Maumelle's Annual Fourth Fest fireworks celebration, Christmas in the Park, and the Tree Lighting Ceremony. Lake Willastein also hosted the popular River Cities Dragon Boat Festival, which benefits the Children's Protection Center. The mayor's office even pulled together a dragonboat team. All I will say about that is that.... Well... we didn't exactly win.

The Lake Willastein Pavilion saw steady rental utilization throughout the warmer-weather months. At least one and sometimes several events are facilitated every weekend at the pavilion. Three baseball and six softball tournaments were held at our two complexes. The baseball fields were seeded with perennial ryegrass to have a better playing surface for the opening of the 2025 season.

## **The Public Works Department**

### **The Street Division**

In 2024, the Sanitation Division expanded its fleet with a new Automated Sanitation Truck and Knuckle Boom Truck to improve curbside service. The city collected more than 635 tons of single-stream recycling, maintaining an exceptionally low contamination rate compared to



neighboring communities. The team also processed and sold 21 tons of cardboard, four tons of plastics, one ton of steel cans, and 15 tons of mixed paper. Curbside waste collection totaled nearly 6,300 tons, while yard waste efforts diverted over 6,800 cubic yards to composting facilities. Residents can help keep the recycling program strong by keeping food-contaminated packaging, bricks, plastic bags, and rocks out of recycling bins.

**The Street Division**, operating with a five-member crew, maintained hundreds of miles of roads and 31 miles of pathways. In 2024, the city invested \$100,000 in path overlays and \$800,000 in street improvements (our largest amount ever) to address drainage and roadway needs throughout the city.

**The Fleet Maintenance Division** ensured all city vehicles, heavy equipment, and public safety vehicles remained in top condition. They also managed fuel storage and distribution for city operations.

**The Building Maintenance team** completed multiple projects in 2024, including installing new energy-efficient lighting at City Hall, roof repairs at the fire stations, and significant HVAC upgrades to improve air quality in city buildings. Their work spans plumbing, electrical, roofing, general repairs, and emergency snow removal when needed.

**The Grounds Maintenance team** was responsible for major landscaping projects, including planting over 200 trees and shrubs in city parks and along public pathways. They also improved storm drainage in several flood-prone areas, ensuring better water management during heavy rains.

### **Maumelle Animal Services**

Maumelle Animal Services had an incredible year, taking in 935 animals and achieving an outstanding 96% save rate—a testament to the dedication of its staff and community partners. Their team responded to more than 850 incidents. Most of those were for animals at large, which decreased by more than 8% over 2023. There were 32% fewer bite cases in 2024, with 17 cases reported. Over 600 city licenses were issued, and more than 400 animals were spayed or neutered at the animal shelter.

Throughout the year, Maumelle Animal Services prioritized bringing adoption opportunities directly to the community. They were out and about almost every Saturday, hosting events at local businesses and in community spaces. From their monthly adoption events at Petsense to special events at Vortex Arcade, Rowdy Ruff House, Pooch Pointe Grooming, and the State Fairgrounds, Animal Services ensured our animals had the best chance to find loving homes. They also teamed up with Walmart and Purina, participated in the annual Puppy Pool Party, and even became the first shelter in Arkansas to partner with Raising Cane's for an adoption and fundraising event.

Beyond adoptions, MAS made a meaningful impact through outreach and community engagement. Each month, they took dogs to Audubon Pointe Apartments and local retirement homes so that residents could enjoy companionship. They partnered with Hendrix College's Volunteer Program, giving students hands-on experience in animal care, from kennel cleaning to assisting the public. In addition, they welcomed church groups, business organizations, and after-school programs to volunteer at the shelter, strengthening their connection with the community.

At the end of 2024, the City Council promoted Animal Services from a division of Public Works to its own Department, and I promoted Chris Davis from Animal Services Supervisor to Director of Animal Services.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the State of the City is strong. I am proud of everything that we have accomplished and are accomplishing. Together, we have made significant progress in advancing our city's goals, supporting our community, and expanding services. But the journey is far from over. Our commitment to Maumelle's future remains steadfast. With each passing year, we continue to build the future of our great city.

THIS year is especially significant as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Maumelle's incorporation. Over the past four decades, Maumelle has transformed from a small community to a thriving city, thanks to the dedication and vision of our residents, leaders, and city employees. As we reflect on our past, we also look forward to the opportunities ahead, continuing to honor our rich history while embracing the promise of an even brighter future.

Thank you for your continued support; **together**, we will make 2025 even greater success!