Ladies and gentlemen of the Maumelle City Council, department heads, city employees, and my fellow citizens, Arkansas law requires that within the first 90 days of the year I must report to you the municipal affairs of the city and recommend such measures as may seem advisable. This is that report.

2019 was a year of change, action, and planning within the City of Maumelle. Last year saw a new Mayor, a new City Attorney, two new City Council Members, two new department heads (three if you count a new Director of Human Resources that joined us in January - & - four if you count the vacancy created when Jim Narey passed away last week). We completed some projects, such as the new Interchange, We started other projects, and we set the stage for an exciting and productive 2020.

I came to you last year to announce a plan to reduce our current bond debt to save taxpayers from unnecessary interest payments. I am proud to announce that the City underwent a bond refunding and issuance that effectively refinanced some of our debt to pay off the bonds 4 years early with a gross cash flow benefit of $1.35 million dollars to the tax payers. Folks… I can’t stress how big of a deal this is. Local governments don’t normally refinance debt except to take on more debt or to reduce their annual payments. I am proud of the City Council’s wisdom and leadership in this matter; Not only did we not take on additional debt, but we increased our annual payments in order to save money in the long term.

While still on the topic of fiscal responsibility, during last year’s State of the City, I announced the goal of better long-term financial planning for anticipated capital expenditures through a proposed overhaul to the budget and budgeting process. Last year the City Council created the Capital Improvement Fund to set aside funds for these anticipated expenditures. We began setting aside these funds in this year’s budget. There is still much work to be done here, but we’ve already begun making meaningful change.

At the 2014 general election, Maumelle voters approved bonds to finance the much-needed remodel and renovation of City Hall. In 2019, architects were selected, designs were completed, and construction commenced. The redesign will effectively transform City Hall’s motel-style layout to a more practical floorplan providing for a more efficient workflow and additional security. A larger Council Chambers will allow for more seating. And new technology will allow for the live streaming of City Council meetings from not only the Council Chambers, but the primary conference room. I anticipate completion of this project in the fourth quarter of the year. Special thanks to Central Arkansas Water for allowing us to use one of their buildings during the first Phase of Construction.

Aside from the obvious change of Mayor, the Mayor’s office saw substantial changes last year through the addition of the newly modified positions of what is now the Chief of Staff position and the Communications Coordinator.

Chief of Staff Scott Grummer brings his expertise, strategic thinking, and organization to the City. He has had his fingers in virtually every project that we’re working on and has been the key factor in our moving into overdrive at City Hall.

Effective communication to and from City Hall is vital to a successful and responsive local government. Anyone who follows the City on Social Media knows my Communication Coordinator: Rachel Hall. Because of her efforts, we have seen the City’s Facebook page likes increased by 35% and its followers by nearly 43%. Some of our Facebook posts have been known to reach over 15,000 people. Our Twitter has increased its followers by 13.5% and our Instagram by over 117%. These may seem like mere numbers, but they translate to a stronger, more-informed community and a more responsive City government. Some of my favorite social media posts are the videos Rachel has produced. Such videos include “Introductions to the City Council Members”, “A day in the life of a Police Chief,” “the Very Merry Maumelle Mission”, and who can forget our most popular video of 2019, “Chief Sam Williams Retires After 47 Years.”

Speaking of Communications, TONIGHT I will be going live on the City’s Facebook page to answer questions about the state of the City. For those watching live right now, feel free to throw a question in the chat now or hop on tonight to ask.
While still on the topic of communication, I am proud to announce that the City of Maumelle will partner with SeeClickFix—a request and work management app and web tool that will strengthen communications between residents and the City by allowing residents to post non-emergency neighborhood issues, such as potholes or streetlight outages. Stayed tuned for more information in the next month or two.

Public Safety remains the City’s primary focus. Last year, the Maumelle Police Department saw the retirement of its long-time Chief, Sam Williams, and the promotion of Cory Pickard to Chief of Police. As I reflect back on my first year as Mayor, perhaps the most difficult single decision I faced was the selection of the new Chief of Police. Six internal applicants faced a grueling and technical achievement phase followed by an initial interview comprised almost exclusively of questions drafted by the other applicants, and culminating in a 4-plus hour interview and ride-as we patrolled the streets and responded to calls. I am confident that all six applicants could have done a great job as Chief, but Cory Pickard came out on top. If you’d like to learn more about our new Chief of Police, check out the Day in a Life video of him on our Facebook page where, yes, he does visit a local donut shop.

We have made it a priority to have a sufficiently staffed and qualified dispatch and 911 call center. Last year, we added two new dispatcher positions and this year we adjusted the pay of dispatchers and senior dispatchers upwards by 15% to ensure that we are able to recruit and retain top candidates to these underpaid and often undervalued positions.

Maumelle consistently rates among the safest City’s in the State. Unfortunately, that does not mean we are crime free. There were two homicides in 2019 and the Maumelle Police Department was able to close both by arrests within a short amount of time. They are still actively investigating the single homicide from 2018 with the help of the local FBI field office. Last year there were 10 narcotic overdoses, a number that would be higher if our first responders weren’t supplied with Narcan, which can reverse the effects of opioid overdoses.

The Police Department saw a slight decrease in total calls for service and arrests were down 19% though the total number of 911 calls remained about the same. The Patrol Division saw an 11% decrease in traffic stops putting it about on par with 2017, but saw an increase in traffic citations of 22%.

One of the top concerns of Maumelle residents continues to be speeding through residential neighborhoods. As I stated last year, traffic enforcement is only one solution to the problem. Late last year, Public Works was able to purchase two portable radar speed displays. Expect to see these speed displays and traffic enforcement officers on streets near you. Please remember to drive safe.

Here are a few fun facts: 2019 saw 27 people graduate from the Citizen’s Police Academy, Police conducted 1,740 residence checks, received 4,209 training hours, and drove 407,275 miles. That’s a lot of City miles driven and it puts a lot of stress on our fleet of vehicles, which is why I will soon be bringing to the City Council a proposal to keep our police fleet up-to-date and functional.

The Police Department’s goals for 2020 include: increased community outreach, implementation of a new defense tactics training program for officers, additional in-service training hours, an increased focus on the reduction of impaired drivers, and accreditation of the Maumelle Police Department through the Arkansas Chiefs of Police Association.

Before I discuss the Maumelle Fire Department, I want to take a moment to recognize its Chief, Gerald Ezell, for his tremendous act of selflessness in donating a kidney to someone that he didn’t know. This courageous act exemplifies Chief Ezell’s desire to help others and sets a tremendous example for the Firefighters under his charge.

The Maumelle Fire Department continues to be a leader in Arkansas with one of the top trained departments in the State. They pride themselves in providing not only EMS and suppression services, but also top-notch Fire Prevention, Code Enforcement, and Fire Education to our residents and businesses.

For the year 2019, one hundred and thirty business inspections were conducted within the City of Maumelle, resulting in the correction of 49 code violations. The Fire Marshall’s office continues to do an excellent job of assuring that new businesses to the City of Maumelle are following fire code and are some of the safest places in Arkansas for our citizens and visitors.

The total number of Fire Department responses for the year was up about 3% to 1,746. Medical emergencies, traumatic injuries, and medical assists made up the largest percentage of emergency runs at 65%. Fire responses consisted of 56 calls for a total dollar loss for buildings of $927,000.

Every Maumelle Firefighter is also a licensed EMT, but the Department had two more firefighters obtain their Paramedic License, which brings our total to six Paramedics (or two per shift). This allows us to provide Advanced Life Support to the citizens of Maumelle quickly.
One goal the Fire Department has for 2020 is to start a completely voluntary program where residents can obtain a key lock box that Fire and Police personnel can use to gain access into a person’s home during times of emergency by using an app on their phone. This program would allow our older or less-abled population to ensure Fire and Police can gain entry without having to damage the entry door.

The Department of Senior Services, led by Director Nicole Vogler, continues to strengthen our 50+ community through the services provided at the Maumelle Center on the Lake, promoting health and well-being for this population. For the year 2019, the Maumelle Center on the Lake had a total membership of 1,713, an increase of over 6%. They also had over 134,000 member visits logged. They logged over 7,600 trips and 20,511 total volunteer hours an increase of over 4,270 hours. I want to send a special THANK YOU to each and every person that volunteers at the Center on the Lake. Volunteers are instrumental to making this department a success. Even with these great numbers, we are always looking for more volunteers. Stay tuned to the City’s social media for an exciting recruiting push!

The Department of Senior Services continues to strive for improved communications to members through the use of social media, automated calls, text, email, printed fliers and newsletters. The implementation of new features to the Department’s membership software has allowed staff to send out reminders and notices to members, which resulted in the increased utilization of services and the number of visits logged at the Center on the Lake.

Senior Services staff and volunteers continue to host and participate in various community events such as Christmas in July, Halloween Carnival, and the holiday parade. If you haven’t checked out the Center on the Lake for you or your loved ones, you’re doing you and them a disservice! Led by Director Mike Hogan, Public Works, and its multiple divisions including Animal Services, Building/Fleet/Grounds Maintenance, Streets, and Sanitation with their 45 employees are poised for another industrious year.

In 2019, we saw some long overdue improvements to the stormwater drainage system on Victoria Circle and a badly needed overlay improvement project on that street. Public Works is also in the final stages of a stormwater drainage project in north Maumelle on Frontier Drive designed to prevent standing water in the roadway and to show some love to an area of town that many think is outside the City limits.

For 2019, the City Council approved $400,000 for Street Infrastructure-Overlays, which is $100,000 more than in prior years. As such, we saw additional street improvement overlay projects on streets such as Woodland, Stoneledge, Riverwood, Barber, and a portion of Arnold Palmer. The City Council again approved $400,000 for overlays this year and I’m proud to announce that the Arkansas State Aid City Street Committee recently approved $300,000 in funding to overlay a portion of Odom North.

We still need a thorough analysis of the annual funding necessary to maintain or improve the conditions of City streets over the long run. To do this, we need a thorough audit of the condition of city streets, the rate of their deterioration, and the estimated costs of improvement. This last year we explored various technologies and services that could provide us the data needed to make informed decisions for improving and preserving our roadway infrastructure. However, additional exploration is required before we find the perfect fit for Maumelle.

While we are on the topic of roads, a proposed roundabout at Odom South and Club Manor including nearby storm drain replacement and the construction of additional pedestrian improvements was engineered and bids were received. The total cost of the project—$1.2 million—was presented to the City Council, and the Council elected to table the roundabout in favor of a more thorough study of that intersection. The City Engineer is completing his report and recommendations, which will be presented to the City Council this year.

While on the topic of roundabouts, engineers are currently studying a potential connection of Country Club Parkway and White Oak Crossing in order to recommend a solution to a growing traffic problem. One aspect of the analysis that I’m particularly proud of is the City’s effort to solicit feedback from residents and businesses at the front end of this project. The City’s recent online poll received 1,257 responses and we found that 54% of respondents like or extremely like roundabouts and only 25% dislike or extremely dislike them, with 21% reporting that they neither liked nor disliked roundabouts. The preferred solution appears to be a roundabout connecting the two roads, but we will know more very soon.

Perhaps the primary reason we are even discussing an enhanced connection between Country Club Parkway and White Oak Crossing is the opening of the White Oak Crossing Interchange at I-40. Last year, I promised the Interchange would be opened by Christmas so I was delighted to see the Ribbon Cutting in early November. Our recent poll showed that 84% of respondents believed the White Oak Crossing Interchange has reduced traffic on Maumelle Boulevard. We have received reports that the Interchange has reduced some residents’ commute by 10 to 15 minutes each way. This Interchange has been discussed and planned in Maumelle for decades and it was a great honor to be a part of its completion.
In 2012, Maumelle voters approved the issuance of approximately $3.2 million in bonds to widen and rebuild portions of Crystal Hill Road (and a short portion of Counts Massie Road that intersects it), both of which are within the City of Maumelle. Last year we decided scale the project down from a 4-lane road with a roundabout to a 2-lane road with a median and turning lanes. This will save taxpayer money, but it required a redesign of the road. Originally my goal was to have shovels in the ground last fall, but due to engineer delays and difficulties acquiring the necessary rights of way, we are only just now seeing construction begin with Central Arkansas Water’s relocation of a water main, which will (hopefully) immediately be followed by construction on the road itself.

The long-awaited Adaptive Traffic Signal Control System, which involves updating the traffic signals along Maumelle Boulevard, is under construction and should be completed within a few months. Contractors have run into a few issues during Phase 1 installation that caused occasional outages of the traffic signals, but these issues were often able to be repaired quickly.

Sufficient lighting along City streets is an important public safety issue and we found that too many existing street lights are not functioning properly. We have not come up with an adequate solution to this problem, despite a lot of time and effort by myself and my Chief of Staff, in cooperation with Entergy representatives. We continue to seek a solution to identify, report, and track outages and to ensure that outages are being repaired in a timely manner. I must admit that the failure to solve this problem is probably my biggest shortcoming of 2019. But hey, here’s to 2020!

Last year, we began and completed the Edgewood Sidewalks project, which greatly increased walkability around City Hall, the library, and Charter school. We don’t have any new, big sidewalk or walking path projects slated for this year, though we do have plans for improvements to existing sidewalks and paths. One goal for this year is the creation of a Master Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan so that we can strategically improve our trails, walkways, and bicycle paths.

I am proud to announce that our 2017 grant application for a Flood Mitigation Project was recently approved by FEMA, which will cover 75% of this $4 million project. This project will improve drainage on a tributary of Marche Creek designed to prevent flooding to a 120-unit apartment complex, 160 townhomes, and 16 single-family residences. If the flood mitigation project progresses as anticipated, engineering will be substantially completed this year with construction beginning late this year or early next year.

It would be a shame to fail to note that when the Arkansas River was flooding, your Public Works employees (and employees from other departments) worked tirelessly to help protect homes from flooding by providing sand and sandbags, filling sandbags, and actually delivering filled sandbags to the most vulnerable homes. How many cities do you know that do that?

The Animal Services Division of Public Works saw 26 fewer animals enter their doors as compared to 2018. Out of 528 animals that entered the shelter 525 left through owner reclamation, adoption, or went to a rescue. In addition to canines and felines, numerous chickens and guinea pigs entered the animal shelter. Maumelle Animal Services’ live release rate for 2019 was 97% and there were zero rabies cases in the city.

Maumelle Animal Services continues its close relationship with the nonprofit organization, Maumelle Friends of the Animals, including new programs such as Comfort a Pet which took place on July 4th during the fireworks and had over 180 people in attendance. A special THANK YOU goes out to the Maumelle Friends of the Animals for their continuing support of Animal Services.

As usual, the Sanitation Division has been busy over the past year. We are adding a new Automated Sanitation Truck this year and have added several new positions. We have found that staffing difficulties in the Sanitation Division effects all of Public Works’ operations and short-term personnel shortages in the Sanitation Division require reallocation of personnel from other Public Works Divisions, which in turn puts those Divisions behind. After all, Trash Pickup must go on!

In 2019, Single Stream Recycling amounted to 520 tons. Transfer Station staff baled and sold 95 bales of cardboard, 5.8 tons of mixed plastics, nearly 1,300 pounds of steel cans, and nearly 23 tons of mixed paper.

In total, the sanitation crew disposed of 5,462 tons of solid curbside waste & 500 tons of transfer station solid waste. Curbside yard waste totaled 5,325 cubic yards and transfer station yard waste totaled 1,760 cubic yards.

2019 was the first full year the City’s sanitation fees were billed and collected by Central Arkansas Water, which resulted in a $60,000 increase to our bottom line.

And this brings us to the Finance Department led by Director Shannon Vega. Being prepared for a timely audit continues to be a problem for Finance. The Department underwent a reorganization last year and added a new accountant, steps that we believe were necessary to get the department caught up and running like a finely tuned machine.
Finance is continuing its efforts to streamline tasks to improve efficiency and internal controls within the department. Starting last year, the department moved to a paperless environment resulting in quicker and easier access to information needed for daily business, research, and audits.

Finance has played a pivotal role in our ongoing deployment of new budgeting and financial reporting software that, once fully implemented, will allow for greater long-term financial planning and transparency of the City’s financial affairs.

City Clerk/treasurer Tina Timmons and the finance director worked hard throughout the year to make sure that the clerk’s office and the finance department coordinated their efforts and worked together as a team. Best practices were sought and implemented in both departments. As part of that effort, the deputy city clerk received additional training in order to assist the finance department with daily operations as needed. The City Clerk obtained her designation as a Certified Municipal Official from the Arkansas Municipal League where she also completed her second year as an Advisor for Cities of the First Class.

The City’s phone contracts were renegotiated resulting in monthly savings for the same level of service. The city realized this savings by converting to Voice Over IP. The second phase of the VOIP phones were installed at Parks and Recreation and City Hall. The final phase will be completed in 2020.

In 2019, City Attorney Melissa Krebs prosecuted all misdemeanors, traffic violations, and ordinance violations in Maumelle District Court, resulting in 3,205 charges processed, an increase of nearly 1,000 over 2018. She also handled truancy matters for Pine Forest Elementary, Maumelle Middle School, and Maumelle High School through the Pulaski County Juvenile Court system, representing the City in hearings there twice a month. Petitions involving fifteen individual students were initiated during 2019.

The City Attorney litigated or oversaw litigation in civil matters involving the City. In 2019, there was no new civil litigation case filed against the City of Maumelle. The 2018 case of Jennifer Corriault vs. City of Maumelle, which concerns the method for payment of overtime compensation, remained in active litigation and is set for trial in 2020.

The City Attorney provided regular legal advice to the Council, the Mayor, and City employees and commissioners during regular office hours, in the context of regular meetings, and on an on-call basis. She assisted in the preparation of the majority of the 70 ordinances and resolutions considered in 2019. She also remained actively involved in the regular operations of the City, providing counsel on many code enforcement, planning, contractual, personnel and policy matters. The City Attorney’s purpose remains to defend and pursue the interests of the City and to assist in achieving its goals while, first and foremost, protecting the rights of its citizens.

The Maumelle District Court, led by Judge Rita Bailey, entered dispositions in over 3,200 cases. The Court collected $193,000 in fines and $17,000 in probation fees. It also entered judgment in 32 Civil and Small Claims cases in 2019.

The Court is most proud of the timely completion of the upload of data to the State pertaining to individuals that owe past due fines and court costs in order to participate in the State Setoff Program. This program allows for the Court to collect past due fines and costs by essentially putting a lien against the debtor's state tax refund. The state then collects those funds to the extent they become available and forwards them directly to the Court.

This year, the Court plans on implementing an Amnesty Program to allow those individuals that have outstanding Failure to Comply or Contempt of Court warrants to come to Court and surrender themselves on those warrants without the fear of being jailed or assessed additional fines and costs. It will give those eligible for the program to essentially, start over and get on the right track regarding their responsibility to the Court, financial or otherwise.

In January of this year Keisha Walker joined the City as the new Director of Human Resources. Last year, HR assisted in an extensive salary study and analysis to evaluate the City's overall compensation packages. Human Resources recommended, and the City Council approved, salary adjustments for those positions most underpaid, but we still find it difficult to compete on salaries with comparable cities.

HR also hosted the City's 11th annual Employee Appreciation Day where 25 full-time employees were recognized for their years of service. Most notably, Lynda Byrd with the Maumelle Police Department was recognized for 25 years of service with the City.

Last year, in an effort to recognize some of our outstanding employees, I created the Mayor’s Employee of the Month program where the City’s highest achieving employees were recognized for their contributions. This program has been a success and the 2019 Employee of the Year will be announced soon!

At this time, I would like to announce the 2019 Employee of the Year as ... Allison Jones. Allison is always pleasant and willing to help others. She has a can-do attitude with a strong work ethic. Her skills, knowledge, organization,
communication, and initiative have caused her to thrive as the Office Administrator for Parks and Rec. In a very close second place, and deserving of an honorable mention, is Fire Chief Gerald Ezell for the reasons that I stated earlier.

The Parks and Recreation Department, led by Director Phillip Raborn, strives to improve upon the services offered to the citizens of Maumelle while contributing to the overall sense of community in town.

Parks and Rec membership numbers decreased 4.6% last year, though the Community Center consistently served over 3,000 paying members annually, who utilize the facility’s indoor walking track, it’s basketball, pickleball, and tennis courts, cardio and weight room, as well as the aquatic center.

Parks and Rec continues to be involved in countless community events and activities, such as Maumelle’s Annual 4th Fest, the Daddy Daughter Valentine Dance and Mother Son Date Knight Dance, the City of Maumelle Veteran’s Day and Memorial Day Ceremonies, and the Halloween Haunted House and Carnival with the proceeds benefiting the Maumelle Youth Council, and much more.

This last year has seen improvements to Lake Willastein, including extensive dirt work, irrigation, sod addition, and curbing to complete Phase 4 of improvements. The Lake Willastein Pavilion saw steady use throughout the warmer weather months. At least one, and sometimes several events, are facilitated there every weekend.

The May 2019 flooding of the Arkansas River wreaked havoc on the grounds of the Park on the River, where over 6 feet of water washed away sod, destroyed the fencing, and nearly carried away the floating dock. Parks personnel relocated, repaired, and re-installed the dock and the lower area of the Park on the River was officially reopened. We did receive FEMA grant funds to help with the completion of repairs to the fence and sod.

For 2020, the Parks and Recreation Department intends to construct the new splash pad with the hopes of completion before summer’s end while continuing its assistance in fundraising for Maumelle’s All Inclusive Playground where kids and families of all ages and abilities can learn, grow, and play.

Following the retirement of Jim Morley, the longtime Director of Building, Code Enforcement & Permits, Trent Carter was promoted to run this Department.

2019 single family residential housing took a slight dip with 66 new permits issued this year versus 79 last year. The total number of permits issued was down 200 over last year to a total of 2,056 and permit revenues were down 22% to $187,000. Just as last year, there were twelve commercial remodel permits issued. There were 2 new commercial construction permits: One for 10 Fitness’ new corporate headquarters near Lake Valencia and one for the Kimberly Clark expansion for which the City Council authorized the issuance of up to $110 million in Industrial Development Revenue Bonds.

In 2019, code enforcement issued 676 requests for compliance tags, 24 citations to appear in Maumelle District Court, and 26 storm water notices of violation.

Going forward to 2020, the Department will continue to strive for excellence in dealing with our citizens and contractors by helping them understand the need for permitting and inspection of construction work to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of our community.

Last week, the Department of Planning and Zoning, the City, and our Community suffered the loss of Jim Narey who served as the Planning and Zoning Director for the last 17 years. In his final report on the State of Planning and Zoning, Jim reported to me the following:

New Commercial development was on the upswing in 2019. Some examples include Diamond Park Commercial, a convenience store/car wash complex at Diamond Park Lane and White Oak Crossing; the Benson Park Addition, a 14,414 square foot commercial center on Country Club Parkway; as well as Albright Commercial, a 2.48 acre commercial center also located on Country Club Parkway.

Maumelle’s City Stormwater Management Program was audited by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality for the second time in 10 years with no discrepancies. We also received an audit from FEMA for the City Floodplain Management program, with no discrepancies, and received a commendation from Region VI headquarters. This was this was the first time ever for Maumelle to receive an audit from FEMA and ADEQ in the same year.

And in Jim’s own words, “No year would be complete, it seems, if the Planning Commission didn’t consider plans for a new church to locate in Maumelle, and 2019 was no exception. Calvary Chapel Church, Pastor Brad Wood, [will be] located in the space previously occupied by U.S. Pizza.”

For the time being, Chief of Staff Scott Grummer will take on Jim’s responsibilities, but it may prove time for some intra- and inter-departmental restructuring to better accomplish our mission. One thing that’s clear is that our Planning and Zoning ordinances are in desperate need of updating.
One of the primary goals of the Community & Economic Development department, led by Director Judy Keller, is Business Retention and Expansion. Part of these efforts include city-hosted quarterly business luncheons with local industrial leaders. Business Retention and Expansion visits are ongoing and help city staff identify areas of concern or areas of need. Two existing industries are considering significant expansions in 2020, and Kimberly-Clark currently has a 68,000 square feet expansion underway. This year, Kimberly-Clark will be celebrating 30 years of operation at the Maumelle facility.

In addition to manufacturing electronic connectors, Molex now produces medical equipment. This required some extensive renovations in the existing facility. In 2019, Molex initiated a rebranding of the Maumelle facility; it is now Phillips-Medisize, a Molex company.

The City began working with Entergy and the owners of the 121 acre industrial site in 2018 to obtain Entergy’s Certified Select Site recognition. Those efforts culminated in November 2019, with recognition of the site as a Certified Select Site. With a Wetland Delineation, archaeological studies, Environmental Phase 1, and various other reports already completed, the property and community are more competitive when a company is looking for a location. Already this year, the site is under review by three separate industries.

I am hopeful that there will be a big announcement concerning the Industrial Park in the coming months, but as is often the case in these situations, everything is just so darn “top secret.”

The City of Maumelle continues to partner with Metro Little Rock Alliance, who markets the 12 county region in central Arkansas. The city worked closely with the entire MLRA team to select a marketing company to develop a website and a strategy to promote the region and bring awareness of the opportunities that are available in the region. One of the strategies was a Familiarization tour of the region for a group of out-of-state consultants. The city participated in several meetings and outings with the consultants, including a tour of the Maumelle Industrial Park and the recently certified Select Site.

The City also partners with the Maumelle Area Chamber of Commerce to provide community and economic development support. The Director of Community and Economic Development and I both serve as advisors on the Board of Directors. Both City and chamber staff continue to collaborate on a wide array of activities, including:

1. Rebranding of the North Maumelle area;
2. Discussions with the owners of Tract D (the large, undeveloped tract of land next to Kroger) to market and develop the site;
3. Planning for the implementation of Ford Next Generation Learning in all the school districts in Pulaski County;
4. Recruiting new businesses and assisting them, as they settle in Maumelle;
5. Assisting existing businesses to help them prosper; and
6. A wide variety of Community Building events such as the Business Expo and State of the City Luncheon, the Bash on the Boulevard, and much, much more.

The City is taking a more collaborative, holistic, and aggressive approach to plan for and recruit retail, restaurant, entertainment, and commercial entities to the City. One example of our new approach is the North Maumelle Small Area Planning initiative we have underway to bring together and engage stakeholders to establish a path for revitalization strategies in that part of the City.

In closing, 2019 was a productive year with the City’s crowning achievement being the completion of the White Oak Crossing Interchange.

Our theme or motto this year is simple: Excellence! We want Maumelle to excel! We want to create an excellent city to Live, Work, and Play and we believe we can do that if we strive for excellence in all that we do. The phrase “that’s good enough” ... Isn’t. Good enough just isn’t good enough. We want excellence. MAUMELLE DESERVES EXCELLENCE!

Caleb Norris
Mayor