

October 2020 – Newspaper Article

On October 13, 2020, I presented my State of the City presentation to the Chamber. Normally the number of miles paved streets, number of houses, new businesses, etc. are the headlines as we look back in the past. This year I started with a photo of my long, long hair due to the business closures from the pandemic. Who knew a year ago that my barber/hairstylist, would start the conversation? Something I took for granted, a haircut a massage, going to the gym.

City Staff kept working very hard for each of you this year, even with a pandemic. Some highlights:

- A utility analysis was completed. It showed that our Public Works Department is running very well. They have performed such great work that many sewer rates will be decreasing in 2021.
- Street projects: New Roads completed for many developments, street maintenance and some roads that were gravel are now paved.
- Police has increased call numbers. They have been very busy. Their new Police Officer was introduced to the City Council on October 27.
- The EDA has been working hard on High Speed internet. Our hard work was acknowledged with the Governor presenting North Branch with an award. They work hard to bring high speed internet throughout the City. As Mayor, I have been working with Congressional and State representatives to find funding to support extending High Speed internet to those areas in our community without High Speed internet.
- Both Kwik Trips opened. IDEA Company's new headquarters in our industrial park is nearly complete.
- The Liquor Store staff did a great job keeping doors open and working around the shortages of product in the industry.
- The Economic Development and Finance Departments worked on a Revolving Loan Fund and CARES grants to assist our employers. They all work to keep our businesses operating.
- Planning Department completed a complete overhaul of the Animal and Subdivision ordinance. They are working on the Zoning Ordinance. Along with many developments and zoning requests including work to help our schools have classes in the mini-mall.
- The EDA worked with CMHP to try to bring affordable senior housing to North Branch. The request is at the State, stay tuned.
- Finance worked on an updated Capital Improvement Plan, re-financed a bond (to save you all money), and worked on the 2021 budget – less than a 2% increase.
- Building Inspections was very busy all over the City with new homes, home projects, and commercial/industrial projects. They are having one of their best years in 20 years.

-The EDA sold more land! They sold more than 11 acres of industrial land and many acres for housing.

-Recreation worked hard on outdoor concerts, fireworks and playgrounds to continue.

-The City has a new City Attorney.

This past year has been a challenge for all of us. I am proud to state that your City Team took on the challenge and are working hard for you looking forward to more exciting projects in 2021.

Jim Swenson

Mayor of North Branch