

# State of the City of Clinton, 2019

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The following are excerpts from the State of the City address given by Mayor Phil Fisher at the Clinton Chamber of Commerce Annual Celebration late last month. The full text of the address is available on The Clinton Courier's Facebook page.

By Clinton Mayor Phil Fisher

I want to share with you my thoughts on five topics - our crime statistics, economic development, the Train Depot, Municipal Court, and the 1% hotel tax.



Special to The Clinton Courier

I want to introduce a new campaign. As you know, our way of inviting people to our city is the "You Belong Here" campaign. We followed that with the "Lock It or Lose It," or LOL, campaign to discourage crime by locking your property. We are implementing a new campaign aimed at the internet complainers that find humor or power in being critical on line. These naysayers rant about anything that crosses their mind without first contacting the business and talking to them. Objectivity, fairness, accurate information and simple consideration are of insignificant value to them.

This campaign is important because retailers view city blogs and boards, just as potential employers do. When they see so much criticism from a city about the business community, they look elsewhere - and there are plenty of places to locate. I had a restaurant tell me that the criticism of the businesses in their industry convinced them to locate in another metro city.

Some of you have been good about getting on line and responding. I appreciate your effort to put a more balanced thought process out there. The City is willing to help by providing accurate information to those that want to respond, but we need to temper any exchange with the critic in a humorous way. So, tonight we are starting the "Stay Classy, Clinton" campaign. End your positive responses to the complainers with "Stay Classy, Clinton" to remind them that our city's problems are so much less than other communities face.

Regarding crime, the good news is that crime continues to drop in Clinton. This is directly tied to more police

officers on the street, updated equipment and cars, additional training, the use of our own pistol/rifle range, and superior leadership at all levels in the department.

While our sister cities struggle, we continue to improve, showing reduction in six of seven most important categories since 2013. From 2013 to 2018, the total reduction of these crimes is 67.5%.

On the economic development front, the Hillman Commons project is set to begin (weather permitting) in February. Hillman Lofts will open 91 units with approximately 140 residents.

The new Lion's Club Park received a donation of \$100,000 from Lion's Club International. On top of the TIF, Chartre [Hillman Commons developer] has donated an additional \$38,000 to the new Lion's Club Park and will maintain the park at their own expense. The Jr. Civic League has pledged \$25,000, MC has pledged \$30,000, Clinton has \$12,000 in-



vested, and Leland Speed donated \$30,000 - for a total of \$235,000. The design is almost complete and will be ADA- and sight-impaired-capable, allowing all children an opportunity to play together.

While I continue to spend half of every week on economic development, I am not able to put in the time and effort required. We need someone representing our City that knows the retailers and the developers. Someone that can pick up the phone and get through to the decision maker, travel to their locations, and assist in putting the deals together.

I posted a nationwide advertisement for a full time Economic Development Director to manage the recruitment of retail and coordinate all economic planning for Clinton.

I also categorize infrastructure under economic development. Bad infrastructure hampers economic development. Now, I'm not telling you this because it is an election year for State

and County officials. But this is important for all to remember: our City received a great deal of money from the Legislature and Hinds County this past year.

Representative Philip Gunn gave the City \$1,000,000 for use on streets that we cannot afford to repair without eating up our entire paving budget. Speaker Gunn led the passage of legislation that will add \$660,000 per year to Clinton's paving budget, allowing us to begin backing the tax increase for paving out of your millage earlier than planned.

Senator Hillman Frazier continues to send money to the City for historic markers, allowing us to showcase our community. Our two Hinds County Supervisors, Darrel McQuirter and Mike Morgan, gave the City \$600,000 each for paving - total \$1,200,000 - and money for bridge repair.

And we just received word that MDOT awarded the City \$1,351,981 for rebuilding the Kickapoo Bridge and the Cynthia Bridge. Adding an additional \$200,000 from Hinds County will pay the balance to complete the bridge, thanks to Supervisors McQuirter and Morgan.

A few years ago, I spoke with you about a dream. The dream was to construct a Train Depot as a meeting place and small museum with little or no cost to the City. That dream opened in April of 2018 and has experienced great success over the last nine months. With over 3,200 visitors since its opening, the Depot has welcomed Clinton residents, out-of-state travelers, preschool classes, Home Owners Associations, politicians, church groups, and more.

The City has also hired a full-time judge to provide a more efficient court. I believe there is a need for this and fought hard to get it in place. The position was advertised, and nine candidates submitted applications. Alderman Garrett and I worked the number down to four through interviews, and the other alderman met to have their questions answered and give their recommendations.

Taking all that into account, the Board approved my recommendation of Judge Steven Boone as the City's first full-time judge effective January 30.

Judge Boone is meeting with the police chief to determine the best scheduling for the court. I anticipate this scheduling will make the court more efficient. Together, we can do anything - and stay classy, Clinton.

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