

9/2/14 State of the County Address

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the 2014 State of the County address where I am honored to share the podium with David Jackson, Mayor of the City of Madisonville and Jenny Sewell, Mayor of Dawson Springs, Kentucky.

Thank you, to the Madisonville-Hopkins County Chamber of Commerce for being our host today. To Lee Lingo, your staff and Board, the work you do supporting our local businesses, providing a forum for discussion and new ideas, and fostering stronger connections helps make us a community.

I also want to thank Mary Difini for the delicious meal we were served and the First United Methodist Church for their hospitality.

Thank you to our state and county-wide elected officials present, as well as our local and all city officials. We all benefit from your experience, expertise, and support.

Finally I thank my colleagues on the Fiscal Court and all County employees for your dedication in serving the citizens of Hopkins County as we meet our challenges together.

Today is September 2nd....

Let me share three September 2nd "Today in History" events with you.

1. Adolph Rupp, American basketball and Kentucky coach was born (1901).
2. Vice President of the United States Theodore Roosevelt utters the famous phrase, "Speak softly and carry a big stick" (also in 1901).
3. Japan surrendered formally at ceremonies aboard the battleship Missouri (1945).

History is important..... it tells us who we are as a people, where we've been, and can be a key factor in determining our future.

I believe today's State of the County message should be, at its core, a report on our progress (our history). How have we fulfilled our responsibilities as County leaders and employees?

Hopkins is a very stable County...we have not cut services, we have not raised taxes for county services, and we are blessed with a stable employee base. We have maintained our excellent credit rating.

Once again the area of great concern is financial...too many businesses have closed or are struggling to continue, and a record number of residents seek help to pay their rent, utilities,

and other necessities. A positive indication that our economy is improving is that unemployment has gone from 7.8% in July 2013 to 6.9% July of 2014. That is a meaningful reduction and good news to the family units affected.

Some announcements shared by Gerald Cook of the Economic Development Corporation include: the new location of Advance Tabco, Inc. in Dawson Springs, B&K Wood Products location in the former KI Building in Madisonville, Implementation of Innovate Hopkins County entrepreneurial development program, Creation of a partnership between local banks and the EDC to create a new small Business/start up loan program named "HC Ventures", Participation in the "one Million Cups" networking venue, The start of the "Industry of the Month" program in Hopkins County, and Most recently, a new conveyor belt sales and service facility, the Belt-Tech, LLC.

Also, we are the first county to receive a \$1,000,000 grant for scattered housing. 10 houses are being built, 3 of which are complete and occupied.

However, a direct negative result of the economy has been the reduction in distribution of anticipated coal severance funds. Several agencies did not receive full funding in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, and we are unsure of the actual funds that will be received this year for approved projects.

- Several projects that were funded include:
- City of Nebo Community Center Improvement
 - City of Mortons Gap city building improvement
 - City of Nortonville project
 - Communication project for Sheriff's Office
 - 14 Volunteer fire departments
 - Madisonville Community College School Counts
 - Dawson Springs Water tank repair
 - Hanson water project
 - St. Charles city hall and park
 - White Plains water project
 - Ballard Convention Center upgrade
 - Roads and equipment

And are proud of the recently completed Dr. Festus Claybon Splash Park in Madisonville.

We have been involved with several joint coal severance projects such as the restoration of the beach area at Pennyrile State Park (with Muhlenburg County).

In addition, coal severance funds have been allocated directly to projects that include every city in Hopkins County as recipients since January 2007 in the amount of \$4,124,660.

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As in past years, I solicited input from each County department, asking that they highlight accomplishments made during the past year. I proudly share them with you:

The **County Attorney's Office** received Kentucky's Outstanding Performance Award for the 5th consecutive year for child support collection. The agency also recovered over \$100,000 for local merchants in cold checks collection and over \$400,000 in delinquent tax recovery.

The **GIS Department** relocated their office to the Courthouse to ensure convenient access to GIS services by all agencies, engaged in public awareness campaign to inform citizens of proper address number display and the CodeRED Emergency Notification System enrollment. They assisted the County Clerk's Office with reapportionment and redistricting maps for Hopkins County and created grid index cemetery maps of our county for the Genealogical Society. Along with numerous other projects, they built a map book for Central Dispatch to utilize, and update the Sheriff's Office web based crime map to keep citizens informed of criminal activity in their area.

Our **Community Development Director** has had a busy year. He worked on 41 new nuisance violations and successfully processed 26 nuisance violations with 4 properties being demolished. With the Hopkins County Jail Crew, he investigated 22 illegal dumping complaints. He assisted with moving the Juvenile Justice, a Branch of the State Transportation Department, the GIS office, and Central Dispatch into the Historical Courthouse, and is working with the library on their move to the Center Street facility. During the year the new Public Works Building and Hopkins County Animal Shelter were first occupied. He is currently working on plans for the new Archery Building on the Sports Complex site.

The **Public Works Department** has completed a road inventory to assure all roads match with state and PADD measurements. They have upgraded road equipment to better enable them to care for our roads more efficiently and timely. Moving into their new building on Laffoon Trail has provided a more central County location, where the larger facility allows for better equipment maintenance and the utilization of jail inmates. The **SANITATION DEPARTMENT** has recently been approved for a recycling grant with which they will recycle plastic, cardboard, and newspapers.

The Hopkins County **Emergency Management Agency** has upgraded all 10 weather sirens located though out the county and upgraded their radios to the new digital county radio system. They continue to improve the command post and communication vehicle. Through extensive training, they are well prepared for any unexpected or emergency situation.

Our **Hopkins County Clerk's Office** received an additional grant from the Department of Library & Archives of more than \$33,000 for more document shelving and preservation. The 2013 Legislative redistricting was successfully completed, and They successfully participated with the Secretary of State's Office in the designing, testing, and implementation of the new voter registration system, now being used state-wide. The recycled birdhouse license plate project continues to benefit the Joseph Eddie Ballard Western KY Veterans Center, with more than \$10,000 being raised and distributed.

During the 2013-14 fiscal year, the **Sheriff's Office** successfully acquired \$15,900 in Federal Highway Safety Funds to assist in overtime traffic safety enforcement. They also obtained \$90,000 in Homeland Security funds to assist in the ongoing communications system upgrade for all first responders.

This has been a year of innovation for the **Hopkins County Jail**. With the purchase of a concrete grinding/polishing machine for cost savings use in the facility, they became the first correctional facility with trained deputies to teach this employable skill and trade to inmates.

Training of inmates is a major initiative. The long awaited 1800 square foot community service inmate instructional classroom is near completion, being constructed with inmate labor and building materials purchased from commissary profits. With the donation of an industrial sewing machine from Carhart, they now have the capability to make and repair their own mattresses, thus saving a cost of \$30 each by using materials at hand. Aided with a \$600,000 Bureau of the Justice federal grant they began the "Turning Point Reentry Program" for Hopkins County residents being released into the community. Professional personnel are made available with the intent of helping deter them from returning to jail.

Well known for its garden, the Jail utilized a \$10,000 grant from the Hopkins County Conservation District to purchase a high tunnel greenhouse to start plants from seeds and also extend the growing season.

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Think back to what it must have been like for settlers in 1806-07 when Hopkins County was created. Farming was the mainstay of early settlers. There was little money available so barter was the method of exchange. Can you imagine saying to your family, "I have a great idea. We're going to move away from civilized life here in Charleston or Baltimore, travel by wagon across hundreds of miles and carve a farm from the wilderness"? The only certainty that existed for early settlers was opportunity – opportunity to own land, to build a life, and to be successful.

And, isn't that really what we need to ensure for those to live and work in Hopkins County in the years to come – opportunity? Opportunity to get a good education...to earn a good

living...to live in a safe and attractive community...to build a business..to be involved..to have available services and amenities for a well-rounded life... to be free to choose.

Our mission is to protect the public, to serve our citizens, and to create better opportunities, economic and otherwise, for individuals and families, to improve the quality of life of our communities, and to make a better future for our children. Big challenges, but I believe that through effective and strong leadership; through strategic partnerships and through thoughtful and inclusive vision, we can and we will meet these challenges. In so doing, the lives of the residents of Hopkins County will be greatly improved.

Recently I had the honor of cutting the ribbon at Festus Claybon Spray Park and being commencement speaker for Daymar College. As I encouraged the college graduates to use the strong foundation they had received to design and build their future, I shared one of my favorite quotes, a quote by Nelson Henderson. It reads "The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit."

History.....to build trees for others. That is our challenge...Our true success as leaders will be measured in the legacy we leave...

Personally, I am hoping for a bountiful forest.....

Our future depends upon our ability to work together as one community, to tackle our challenges, and to seize new opportunities. As one community, we can grow our economy and achieve lasting financial stability. As one community, we can create a place our grandchildren's grandchildren will be proud to call home. Together, we can keep the state of the county strong for every person and family-both for now and for the future.

Thank you for coming and for your partnership in writing another chapter of our history.

May God continue to bless each of you and Hopkins County.