

STATE OF THE CITY AND GOALS FOR 2025

CITY OF STAFFORD, TEXAS

JANUARY 29, 2025

BY MAYOR KEN MATHEW

My fellow Staffordians, one year and seven months ago you have trusted me to be your Mayor which was a history making in Stafford. I am honored and humbled by your selection. I can assure you that I will not be a typical politician. I strongly believe that all elected positions are to make the community better, not for self-serving.

I welcome all those who are here in person, especially, Hon Mayor Pro-Tem, Ms Alice Chen, Hon Council members – Ms Virginia Rosas, Mr Xavier Herrera, Mr William Bostic, Mr Chris Caldwell and Mr Tim Wood.

Let me also welcome our Legal Counsel, Ms Bridgette Begle, Mr Bob Jones of Jones Engineering and Mr Briyan Blaum of FMSquared.

For me the most valuable assets of the City are its employees working in different departments. These departments are managed by the Police Chief, Richard Ramirez; the Fire Chief, Larry Di Camello; The City Administration- the City Secretary, Ms Roxanne Benitez; CFO Ms Alka Shah; Public Works: Mr Kyle Jung; HR: Ms Shanell Garcia; IT: Mr Ryan Young; Multimedia: Mr Robert Frith; Court: Hon. Judge Debra Sinclair, Ms Nicole Nguyen; Civic Center & Stafford Center: Ms Susan Ricks. All the employees are dedicated, efficient, productive and cost conscious.

Let us now glance through the different departments:

Police Department: The Police Department under Chief Richard Ramirez had a productive year.

- . Continued Volunteering Meals on Wheels, 498 meals delivered
- . Sgt. Rulong received Life Saving Award while doing Meals on Wheels
- . Received 30,666 different calls for services
- . A total of 4043 Criminal investigations conducted
- . Arrested 1 suspect for Sex Trafficking
- . Recovered 2 victims of Sex Trafficking
- . Large Operation conducted for Food Stamp Fraud, arrested several suspects, cleared numerous cases
- . Large Operation in Burglary of Motor Vehicles, suspect identified for over 20 BMV, arrest warrant issued
- . Patrol dispatched to shots fired call determined that it was an Aggravated Robbery and the suspect was located and arrested.

Fire Department: This Dept is headed by the Chief Larry Di Camillo.

- . They had 4922 incident responses
 - 57% EMS related & 43% Fire related
- . Average response time was 6.13 minutes
- . Incidents per day average 13.44
- . Provided assistance to other agencies 123
- . Created 6 new Fire Fighter positions

- . Created 3 Battalion Chief positions

Information Technology (IT): This Dept is headed by Mr Ryan Young. The department implemented:

- . City wide optic network.
- . Most City facilities went from a single 100mbps to dual 10 Gbps connections
- . Back up internet moved from 60mbps to 1Gbps
- . Now phone services come from two completely different providers
- . Implemented a Zero-Trust framework on the City's network
- . New network switches were implemented
- . New wireless access points were implemented
- . This year IT started the project to replace the City's Core and Access layer switching

Finance Department: The Finance Department is headed by Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Alka Shah and is responsible for Budget Preparation, Budget Management, Payroll, Procurement, Grant Management, Accounts Payable and Receivable, Investments, and overseeing the Financial Audit.

The City has received an 'Unmodified' or 'Clean' audit opinion, which is the highest level of opinion we can achieve. This reflects not only our commitment to transparency but also our strong, conservative financial management practices.

As a result of our diligent efforts, the City has successfully maintained its A2 bond rating. This is a testament to the hard work everyone has put in and the effective guidance provided by our elected officials.

Additionally, I want to highlight the outstanding performance under the leadership of our Chief Financial Officer, Alka Shah, and her team. Thanks to their strategic initiatives, the City earned an impressive \$2.2 million in additional investment income over the past year.

These accomplishments reflect our collective commitment to financial excellence and responsibility. Thank you all for your continued hard work and dedication.

Administration Dept: This department is headed by the City Secretary Ms Roxanne Benitez, Assistant Secretary Ms Shandra Phillips and the Administrative Services Coordinator Ms Richelle Worthington.

This Dept maintains all City Ordinances, Resolutions, Historical Records as well as processes public information requests. They also put together agendas and minutes for all City Council, Stafford Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) and Council Committee meetings.

In addition, the Administration Dept is responsible for all City Elections. Ms Benitez serves as the Election Official. The City Secretary and her staff have done an excellent job of continuing to streamline the processes.

As a result of their increased productivity they are able to reduce the expenses. They continue to be successful in effectively communicating with the public and citizens of Stafford.

Human Resources: The HR Dept is responsible for a variety of functions which include Employee Relations, Compensation & Benefits, Employee Training & Safety, Recruiting and Performance Management.

The HR worked with the Texas Municipal Retirement System to implement the Restricted Prior Service Benefit to the City's Retirement Program.

The Employee Engagement Group successfully organized Veterans Day Recognition, the Employee Appreciation Dinner, our first Pumpkin Decorating Contest and Christmas Decorating Contest.

Currently, we have a total of 246 employees. Like I said before, the employees are our real asset of the city. They are the ones making the things happen.

Civic Center: The Civic Center is managed by Ms Susan Ricks. The 38 year old building can accommodate 900 guests. Ms Ricks is also managing the Swimming Pool which offers pool parties and swim lessons in the morning and the evening during the summer.

Stafford Economic Development Corporation (SEDC): The Stafford Center is entering its 21st year of operation. Ms Susan Ricks is also managing the Stafford Center along with the contractor, Mr Briyan Blaum of FMsquared. The SEDC is headed by the President Mr Randy Krahn. Other members of SEDC are Vice President Mr Damon Leonetti; Treasurer Ms Gwen Goodwin; Mayor Ken Mathew; Councilman Mr William K Bostic; Previous Council members Mr Robert Sorbet & Mr A J Honoree. Several national and international artists perform at this center. In 2024, the City of Safford hosted our inaugural Juneteenth Celebration and continuing to do every year.

Planning & Zoning Commission: Ms Lana Hoelsing is the Chairperson. Other members are: Dr Mathew Vairamon; Mr Clint Mendonca; Mr Aldrin George; Mr Kenneth Grant; Mr Cliff

Cowperthwait; Mr Greg Holsapple. This body is the one recommending to grant permits based on the zoning regulations.

Multimedia: The Multimedia Dept, under the leadership of Director Mr Robert Frith, has continued its strong growth, communicating important information about safety and security. The City's website is constantly updated, keeping the public informed, along with consistent posting of vital information on the website, social media and City's municipal TV channel SMETV and have reinstated the City's Emergency Radio Station, and can now broadcast live from City Hall's Emergency Operations Center in times of crisis. They tirelessly update and maintain the City's Video, audio and transmission equipments and have done so with no impact to the budget. Director Frith and Houston Community College representatives renegotiated and restructured the interlocal agreement the City had with HCC for decades, which resulted in significant savings for the City annually. They have also moved Master Control from HCC to the City Hall, offering more accessibility to manage our SMETV signal in cases of failure and maintenance.

Public Works: This Dept is led by Mr Kyle Jung. Their emphasis is to provide excellent and effective services to the residents and businesses. He along with Mr Scott McElrath, Mr Otis Brown, Ms Laura Morales, and Mr Thomas Coon are responsible for helping Stafford carry on its Planning and Development Mission. The Department is comprised of Permits, Inspections, Planning, Zoning and Economic Development services.

The following are the highlights:

1. 2025 General Street Repair Project estimated at \$2,000,000 (15 streets to be repaired by the City and for an additional 13

streets the City has requested assistance from Fort Bend County). Bids are due on Feb 5th, 2025.

2. Pike Road construction project estimated at \$4,600,000, to remove the existing two lane asphalt road and construct a 3 lane curb and gutter concrete road, approximately 2,400 linear feet long.
3. Responded to two natural disasters – Hurricane Beryl and winter storm Enzo. The sanded 11 bridges and installed barricades in several areas including Hwy 59 and Hwy 90A due to dangerous icing conditions. The department helped and coordinate the removal of 7,325 cubic yards of vegetative debris (trees/limbs/brush) and a total of 971 cubic yard of construction debris (fencing and construction materials).
4. In 2024, the department issued 1,610 building permits, conducted 5,191 inspections, addressed 919 code enforcement cases and handled 233 animals.

Municipal Court Department:

Judge Debra Sinclair presides over the Court and Ms Nicole Nguyen along with her staff facilitates the daily operations. The Court Dept continues to operate on a full schedule.

The Court Dept continues to use Zoom proceedings in special circumstances, like the defendants are ill or out of town. It is continuing with its evening dockets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 5:00 pm.

SMSD:

As we all know the school is a component entity of the City. The theme “We are One” is very appropriate. The gem of the school is STEM Magnet Academy where there is a waiting list to get admitted. The Superintendent of SMSD is Dr Robert Bostic. Under

his leadership and guidance, the school has been doing better and better.

2025 Goals

1. Maintain Zero Property Tax:

Since 1995, for nearly 30 years, the City has done away with Property Tax. Looking at the cash balance, called Fund Balance, there is no urgency for reimposing the Property Tax. The following numbers will clearly lead us to say "No Property Tax".

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
	(The numbers are in Million \$)			
City	6.6	10.6	12.2	14.5
SEDC	7.9	11.4	13.0	18.0
TOTAL	14.5	22.0	25.2	32.5

If we did not have property tax in 2021 what is the justification for imposing property tax now? Right now, the City alone has \$7.9 million more than the FY 2021, which is 120% more or more than doubled. If we take the total including SEDC, the difference for the same period is \$18.0 million more, which is 124% higher. Let me quote what our previous mayor Hon Cecil Willis said at the State of the City Message on Jan 25, 2023. He said "So, count me as a No Vote for property tax in the City of Stafford". Let me also say "count me also as a No Vote for Property Tax".

2. Infrastructure:

Maintain the streets and sidewalks in a better condition and improve the drainage system to reduce flooding and standing water.

- 3. Attract Sales Tax generating businesses:** like retail businesses. Sales Tax is the lifeline of our City.
- 4. Support New subdivisions** to attract young families. That will be beneficial for the school and the City. Their children mostly will choose to go to SMSD and mostly they will shop locally which will bring more Sales Tax to the City.
- 5. Revitalize the Island Area.** The island area is the Capital of the City of Stafford. Looking clean and beautiful will increase the image of our City.
- 6. Eliminate Wasteful Spending.** There are areas where we can find wasteful spending in governmental bureaucracy.
- 7. Diversity:** Our City can take pride in having all the major races proportionally balanced. All major races are around 25%. It is better to have that balance. We are very proud to be in Stafford

CONCLUSION

Let us all stand together as united for the purpose of building a still better future for our beloved City. It is the people who have given us that responsibility. We should not disappoint them. As we have seen from the numbers that I have provided, our City is not broke. Our unique City is well and vibrant.

Let me take this opportunity to thank all 246 employees. They are the ones doing the work, making the City better. I appreciate their dedication, their hard work, their efficiency.

Let me thank all the people in Stafford, all Staffordians, for giving the entire City Council the opportunity to serve you all.

LET US STAND UNITED, LET US STAND TOGETHER.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ken Mathew

**Ken Mathew, Mayor
City of Stafford**