

Text of City Manager Egbert's Report

This is the text of Birmingham City Manager D. C. Egbert's report this week to the city commission regarding the present status, and future problems of the city, which was summarized in a story on Page One, Section One. The report follows:

To assure proper perspective in evaluating the city problems, it is necessary to occasionally review the progress accomplished in commencing previously planned programs. It is also important to carefully evaluate and critically examine the city's financial position and current financial position.

The financial program is the means of effectuating any plan which is developed. With this information, the commission can examine the major problems of the city and determine the degree of the local resources available to solve those problems and provide the citizens with the services and facilities which can be provided within the limits of the available resources and which are most necessary to their well being.

The population of the city now approximates 22,600. The average population increase during the next 10 years would average 400 per year, or a total population of 26,600, the rate of growth being approximately 1.8 per cent. These estimates contemplate the annexation of the Pointe property.

The burden of supplying the necessary services during this period of rapid growth and which are essential to the well-being of the city. Many problems face the commission in meeting the present and future needs of the citizens.

The commission acts on portions of these problems on a continuing basis during the course of regular business. It is advisable to occasionally review the progress of a long range view of their various aspects concerning services with recent progress and long range objectives.

Birmingham has deserved and enjoyed the reputation of a high type residential community offering many inducements, not found elsewhere, to prospective home owners desiring an excellent environment for their families. A major portion of the value of each home is the result of the environment that has been achieved in Birmingham. Each citizen therefore, has a real financial interest in maintaining this environment.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS
L. R. Gare, city engineer, this week reported on projects completed during the past five years at a total dollar volume of \$2,387,500. This represents the projects which have been directly under the control and management of the engineering department.

THE WATER SUPPLY
The improvements to the water system provided an assured supply of water to meet the needs of the population which increased two-fold during the past five years. These improvements were constructed at a total cost of \$517,320. This cost was paid by a bond issue in 1951 of \$250,000, with the balance being paid out of current revenues.

The underground supply was determined several years ago to be the best for future needs. Efforts have been directed toward securing a supply from the city of Detroit acting jointly with other

South Oakland communities. This additional supply will become a reality in 1955.

To assure a supply from Detroit will require a long term contract to finance this project. Funds are being raised through an assured supply.

The municipalities of South Oakland County therefore will continue to be tied with Detroit in any future project for a supply from Detroit or any other source.

Birmingham has been fortunate in having this underground supply available. The water from this source has been produced at a cost of approximately five cents per thousand gallons in the mains. Water from Detroit is estimated to cost approximately 20 cents per thousand gallons.

This new supply will, therefore, add materially to the cost of water served the citizens of Birmingham. Every effort must therefore be made to continue to use the wells as a source of supply insofar as possible.

Chemists have tested the chemical content of the Birmingham supply. Their tests show that satisfactory results will be obtained in mixing water from the Detroit supply with the local well water.

The local well water contains iron and other chemicals some of which will precipitate out at the time of mixing and cause deposits in the water.

This may mean a water treatment plant to permit using the local supply in conjunction with water from the City of Detroit.

SEWERAGE DISPOSAL
Providing adequate sewers and sewage treatment still is one of the major problems and a most troublesome one. Substantial improvement in the sewage disposal facilities has been achieved by providing for the sewage from the east half of the city to be treated by the facilities in the Southeastern Oakland County Sewage Disposal System.

The diversion structures and intertie structure in the Rouge and Valley requires extensive rebuilding and possible replacement. Other portions of the sewerage system requires relief to avoid future difficulties.

The proposed sanitary interceptors to serve the townships of Southfield, Bloomfield and Troy, as well as the intertie structure in the Rouge and Valley, is the most satisfactory answer to the pollution problem in the Rouge River.

The difficulties involved in financing the joint project may result in unreasonable delays which will force the city to construct improvements to the Birmingham sewage disposal plant to provide adequate sewage disposal for this city.

STREETS
The city cannot ignore the problems of surrounding areas. Some plans must be devised whereby sewage disposal can be provided to protect the Rouge River, with the costs of providing this service being borne over a long period.

There has been little recognition by surrounding areas of the responsibility for providing service in the past. These municipalities are, however, now making serious efforts to meet the responsibility of preventing the Rouge River from becoming further polluted.

Birmingham's policy in this matter is to fully meet its own responsibility and join with its neighbors in any program which assures an equitable arrangement for all parties concerned.

STREETS
The street paving program carried on in the past five years has resulted in the construction of

9 1/2 miles of concrete pavement and 8 1/2 miles of asphaltic concrete surfacing. This surfacing program includes the curbs, sidewalks and gravel bases. The total dollar volume for street improvement in the amount of \$1,250,000 represents over 50 percent of the total capital expenditures during this period.

Future Program
This program has been devoted largely to the city's existing paving areas. This was necessary in order to maintain the general character of the city and to prevent the city facing an impossible problem later.

The future program should be continued at the same volume of approximately \$300,000 per year in order to protect existing pavements with resurfacing and make reasonable progress in eliminating the unsatisfactory gravel roads with their high maintenance costs and depreciating effect on property values.

The objective of a clean city cannot be achieved without a continued street improvement program.

HOUSEKEEPING
Waste Disposal
This service, so essential to the modern city, has been an increasingly difficult and expensive service to perform. Birmingham has been fortunate in the past in having available an isolated dump capable of receiving the waste disposed of at a minimum cost.

Garbage was collected by contract for many years. Birmingham is now possessing a staffed and efficient public safety departments.

This policy has proven itself on many occasions and has resulted in Birmingham possessing a staffed and efficient public safety departments.

Police Department
The police department now has 32 total personnel. This has increased from a total personnel of 16 in 1929, when the department was established in the basement of this building, to a total of 20 in 1949, and a present authorized strength of 32.

The average number of policemen per 1,000 population for cities similar to Birmingham is approximately 1.40. This average applied to Birmingham would mean 31 employees. The Birmingham department has 32, including parking meter personnel.

More Adequate Housing for Police Dept.
The department has doubled in the number of personnel since it was established in its present location. The department should be housed on the first floor and more adequate space.

Combined Garbage and Rubbish Collection
The increase in population density in this area requires more adequate collection and disposal of wastes to meet the increase.

It is necessary for this work to be performed efficiently to reduce cost to a minimum. The combining of the collection of rubbish and garbage in one operation has been one step in gaining this efficiency.

Many citizens are requesting discontinuance of the service provided for the collection of garbage from the rear of the residence. This will further reduce cost.

Cooperation of Householder and DPW
It is extremely important that each householder properly use proper containers and that the DPW establish a regular schedule for this service to enable the operation to help us achieve our objective of a clean city.

The department of public works will cooperate in every reasonable manner. They have been instructed to insist on the cooperation of the householder.

The Commission is well aware of the serious effects of careless methods of handling this problem, and such carelessness is equally

serious either on the part of the householder or the collectors.

The street cleaning, sewer maintenance, snow removal, and other activities of the public works department are all necessary to make Birmingham a clean city. These services will become more routine and can be better scheduled as the development period of the city ends.

The department, in the future, will be more concerned with a pure maintenance operation, and will not be involved to any great extent in construction of water services, sewer services, temporary oil services, etc.

The graders, power shovels and other equipment of this character will be replaced by flushers, sweepers, and more efficient sewer cleaning equipment to better perform the maintenance work.

PUBLIC SAFETY
Police
The police and fire departments of the city have been augmented to meet the increased demands placed on these departments by the rapid period of growth.

The general policy in these two departments for many years has been to provide the most efficient equipment and working conditions, combined with adequate training programs, to produce the greatest degree of protection at the least cost.

This policy has proven itself on many occasions and has resulted in Birmingham possessing a staffed and efficient public safety departments.

Proposed Fire Stations
The two proposed fire stations, proposed equipment, and personnel to man this equipment is the culmination of many years' study of the problem and is in conformity with the above stated policy. This program is recommended by the

administration to meet the requirements of this policy.

FORESTRY AND PARKS
A major contributing factor in the attractiveness of Birmingham as a residential community is the tree lined streets. The budgets for each year have provided for the maintenance of a policy of tree plantings to preserve and enhance this attractive feature of our city.

Dutch Elm Disease
The Dutch Elm disease is threatening the elm of this city. Birmingham has been a leader in the area in conducting programs to protect these trees. The costs of these programs have been held within reasonable limits.

The presence of this disease was pointed out in reports early in 1951. The city of Toledo, Ohio, reported the presence of the disease in that city in 1951. Two hundred cases in 1952 and one thousand cases in 1953 were reported in that city. Their forestry department has been successful in controlling the disease there.

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The emphasis on park improvement in recent years has been directed towards improving the recreational facilities with a minor portion of the annual budgets being appropriated for the improvement of the passive parks.

The annual budgets in recent years have contained appropriations in amounts of \$10,000 to \$12,000 each. This permits carrying on an improvement program at a relatively slow rate.

The adequacy of recreational facilities in Birmingham has recently been a matter of concern to a considerable number of citizens. The possibility of public recreational facilities partially offsetting the lack of proper environment in combating juvenile delinquency is debatable.

Reasonable recreational facilities must be an integral part of the community in order to all the needs of a city of this character. Birmingham has not, as yet, acquired reasonable recreational facilities.

The passive park areas also are a major factor contributing to the attractiveness of the city. The problem here is to make the park areas of this character available to the public and yet control their use to avoid their detracting from the surrounding properties.

This has been accomplished in an excellent manner in the development of Baldwin Park from

Southfield extending west to Hawthorne.

FINANCIAL PICTURE
The policy controlling the financial operations of the city has been a comparatively conservative one. The course that has been charted provides for maintaining sufficient capital appropriations in each annual budget to provide for a continuing program of improvements.

The operations and programs have been geared to permit the city to meet its obligations and to assure being in a position to meet all obligations and permit of further reductions.

The commission has not adopted a "pay as you go plan," nor a policy of constructing improvements to be paid for by future taxpayers. The planning of financing is not governed by any which can be applied to any problem and produce an answer.

The city has substantially improved its credit and is protecting its financial position. It may be available to be used at such times as good business judgment warrants its use.

CLAIM COULD BE laid to having for years "paid as you go plan" in that during these years when Birmingham has experienced a phenomenal rate of growth the essential improvements have been provided and there has been an actual reduction in general obligation debt.

The total of the net general obligation debt was \$1,411,479.59 in 1935. This has now been reduced to bonds outstanding at the present time of \$753,000. There is in the debt service fund the sum of \$103,326.31 in cash and securities, leaving a net debt at the present time of \$650,173.29.

There are two yardsticks commonly used to measure the financial condition of a city. Bond buyers are inclined to question the credit of a city when the general obligation debt equals or exceeds \$100,000 per capita, or ten percent of the assessed valuation.

An adequate water supply in 1935 represented 11.57 per cent of assessed value. This percentage will be 1.30 per cent as of April 1 of this year with the reserve funds credited to off-set outstanding bonds. The general obligation debt was \$136.19 per capita in 1935. At the present time it is \$27.86 per capita.

Page 4 THE BIRMINGHAM ECCENTRIC February 25, 1954

During the past five years the ratio of the net general obligation debt to assessed value has been reduced from 2.93 percent to 1.30 percent; and the per capita debt has been reduced from \$54.74 to \$27.86.

During this same period the City has required capital improvements in an amount in excess of \$3,400,000. These capital improvements have been partially paid for by water department funds and special assessment funds, but for the most part have been paid for with general funds.

THE RESOURCES to meet the needs of the city are definitely there. The commission has approved annual budgets during the past five years resulting in a rate reduction from \$30 to \$19 per thousand dollars of assessed value.

It is not anticipated that the needs of the city can be adequately met and permit of further reductions at this time. It is hoped that this tax rate can be maintained.

The commission is faced with constant demands for improved services, and the need for capital improvements is apparent. A careful evaluation must be made to allocate the available resources to return the greatest benefit to the taxpayer and maintain a sound financial policy.

This course is not easy to follow. The record of the city's difficulties and achievements clearly points to the wisdom of such a course.

This report has outlined the recent record of the city and presents a picture of the present situation. There are many problems to be met in order to provide the citizens of Birmingham with

Freedom from flooded basements. Satisfactory sewage disposal. Clean attractive streets. Facilities for recreational activities. Dependable police and fire protection. Efficient and orderly house-keeping.

The continuation of previous policies will not bring all this about immediately. A review of the report filed in 1951 will show that substantial progress has been made, however, on well planned programs.

This report is presented to the city commission as an outline of established policy and plans. The continued effort and cooperation of all concerned will bring further progress in achieving more comfortable and pleasant living for all citizens of this community.

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