STATE OF THE VILLAGE ADDRESS

Good Evening. I would like to thank the Chamber and their President, Mark Morgan for providing this forum to relay information concerning the Village. I would like to recognize the current Council Members and have those present to stand. (Toni Harper, Mike Henwood, Paul McCray, Sherman Prince, Troy Tripp, and Debbie Wolfe; our Clerk-Treasurer Kelley Tripp and our Village Administrator Douglas Hockman. A special thank you goes out to those who ran for the four council positions. Congratulations to David Ray as the top vote getter followed closely by Debbie Wolfe. Troy Tripp was third and close behind him was Mindy George. Alicia Conrad was the fifth candidate and finished with a respectable number of 117 votes.

This has been an eventful year for the Village. We began the year salting streets on a regular basis while working full blast as the weather allowed on repositioning the bricks on Fort Street. We learned a great deal from this project. First and foremost, brick streets and their maintenance demand a lot of time and manpower. With the deterioration of the curbs and gutters through out the Village and the failure in past administrations to even try and remedy the scourge, the Village has a daunting task ahead to bring the curbs and gutters to some semblance of safety. With the curbs and gutters spalling on every block of every street in the Village there are constant calls to "come fix my curb and gutter". The impossibility of this task is forcing the Village to look at remedies that far exceed our revenue and resources. There are three main solutions: the first being to continue at a snail's pace and do what can be done from year to year while deterioration continues at an increased pace. The next would be to seek additional revenue either through continued awards of grants and using our personnel as in kind labor limiting their time to do other work in the Village and providing fewer services. The third solution would be to seek additional revenue through an increase in the income tax raising the rate from 1% to either 1 ½ % to possibly even 2%. This money would allow us to hire outside contractors to come in and do the work. However, on the brick streets we would still have our Village workers doing the repositioning of the bricks. The last issue with the brick streets is the condition of the bricks themselves. While the bricks on Fort St. were in good shape, the bricks on Mulberry are is terrible shape. If you walk down the middle of Mulberry and closely look at the bricks, there are many that are cracked, weathered, and have the edges busted. There are sections on Purvis in the same condition. Even bricks do not last forever.

The Village is also experiencing the aging and deterioration of our trucks and equipment. While not trying to spend any more than we have to, repair costs are growing. We do not have the money to replace equipment but we also try not to throw good money after bad. Our street sweeper is a good example. While we would like to provide clean streets, the street sweeper has undergone much in the way of repairs and now we are faced with the need of a water pump which is no longer made leaving us sitting in the dust. A used street sweeper that is 5-6 years old and still being manufactured would cost the Village close to $75,000 and a new street sweeper is in the $180,000 range. The leaf vacuum has undergone extensive repair yet to replace it the cost is a minimum of $25- $30,000 dollars. Our fleet of trucks are rusting and deteriorating. We need to put a new roof on the water plant and paint the towers and paint the exterior of the building at a cost of around $15,000.

At the end of last year we suffered the break down of our Screw Pumps at the Waste Water Treatment Plant which forced the Village to replace all three Screw Pumps with a new configuration of pumps. Replacing the Screw Pumps would have cost us almost $500,000 but we chose to replace them with powerful sump pumps made for waste which are working well at a cost of $75,000.

As with any aging equipment there is a need to update. At the Waste Water Plant this summer we began losing motors on our blowers which were being subjected to power spikes and overloads. We finally found the problem in our control panels and ordered the new panels we needed at a cost of over $7,000. We lucked out on this, because with the storm on October 31st, the storm burnt out the existing breaker box and control panel which had been put in during 1985. As good luck would have it, we had the electrician already scheduled for installation on November 1st so we didn't skip a beat. The Waste Water Plant is in need of painting and other repairs inside the building.

We have not been able to do any significant paving in the past several years. This is going to continue to become a problem. Angle Street is a main access for those coming in and out of the Village. The number of potholes is on the increase. The Village needs to spend money on crack fill to try and preserve what asphalt we have for as long a period as we can. This is an

expensive venture. Angle Street alone will cost us $28,000 to repave. Carter Street from Broad Street to Fort Street is another $24,000. Crack fill needed would be in the $12,000 - $15,000 range and that is for areas not yet crack filled.

The swimming pool is in serious need of updating. The diving board now needs completely replaced. That entails tearing out the existing base and removing the concrete in order to set in the new base for the new diving board. The concrete area surrounding the baby pool is in need of being tore out and replaced because of the trip hazard of the raised concrete close to the baby pool. We are also dealing with cracks in the deep end that are constantly being repaired. The pool interior will also need painted this Spring.

The Village experienced break downs of our mowers with a constant need of repair. Both of our John Deere mowers went down at the same time during mowing season. We chose to repair them both to get us through the mowing season instead of purchasing a new commercial mower. It is hoped that these repairs will get us through the mowing season of 2014.

In listening to this, I hope you get the feeling that the Village has a lot of need and the Village workers are doing their best with the equipment they have to work with. When something malfunctions the Village workers have to spend their time trying to fix the problem or wait until a repairman can come and fix the equipment. Down time costs us money also.

This next year will be a time for Council to make some hard and tough decisions. With the closure now of Superior Fibers and the loss of that revenue for water, sewer, and income tax, the Village will have to monitor the influx of revenue more closely and may even find it necessary to not provide as many services as we have in the past. The Village must function within the revenues received and will only be able to do what the revenue allows.

During 2013 the Village has made progress. Along with all the repairs we have had to make, the Village has accomplished much.

The bricks on Fort Street are completed. It took a full year because of weather conditions to accomplish this task. As our workers repositioned the bricks it became apparent that in a lot

of areas large portions of the bricks had to be pulled, cleaned and repositioned. In some areas, the whole street had to be tore out doing half the street at a time. Instead of just doing the 18 inches that were initially tore out, our Village workers did it right and made the whole street better because of their efforts. Fort Street is the model for how we want the rest of the Village streets to look.

With the replacement of the pumps and control panels at the Waste Water plant we anticipate many years of operation without major repair or replacement.

Much work has been accomplished in Howell Park. With a special Thank You to David and Debbie Wolfe, we have seen the park become transformed into a beautiful sanctuary where Village residents can go and play, relax and rest, as well as exercise and participate in many different sports. We continue to paint and upgrade the facilities throughout the park. I want to highlight one special addition. Debbie Wolfe headed up a project that has become our first "Butterfly Garden". Debbie and David spent countless hours making this garden happen. A special thank you goes to them for their efforts. We are also in the last phase of repairing the asphalt along the new sidewalk and new curb and gutter from Broad Street out to Howell Park which was funded by a private foundation.

During much of the first half of the year, the Village utilized the free labor of the workers from the Community Transition Center in Lancaster. They worked hard when here and helped propel the success of the repositioning of bricks on Fort Street. It is hoped we can have their help on future projects. Thank You to the Community Transition Center.

To help with an increase of revenue, the Village negotiated and entered into a contract with the Village of Rushville to do their Utility Billing. This generates an additional $11,000 a year and helps supplement our Utility Billing Clerk's pay. We are also working with Rushville for other shared services.

To help with an increase in needed revenues with our Water Utility the Village increased the water rates last January. Facing a deficit for 2013, this increase has stabilized our Water Fund and funded the deficit we were facing with needs of our Water Plant.

This year we requested a grant request from Nature Works for the development of new soccer fields. We have yet to hear from Nature Works on the status of our request. The Village entered into an agreement with Lester Sharp with a 20 year lease for the development of soccer fields on the three acres between Howell Park and the railroad tracks. It is our hope to have the land useable for the soccer teams in the Spring.

I want to recognize our Masonic Lodge and the new flagpole they installed at the front of the Howell Park Village Offices. This was a community service project that brought Masons from a five county area to our Howell Park for its dedication. Thank You for this gift.

The First Annual 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament was held in Bremen this summer. It was a huge success and brought many people to our Village. The American Red Cross was the charity recipient of the team entry fees. Part of the proceeds will be used for a water drinking fountain in Howell Park. A special Thank You to all who made this happen.

I want to recognize the opening of the Fairfield Health Care Offices on the north edge of town where we have medical personnel on duty Monday through Friday. I hope the Village residents see the value of this doctor's office and take advantage of their presence.

Our Elementary School children are going to be safer and have a better route to school with our award of $340,000 grant for Safe Routes to School. This is a joint venture between the Village and the BESAFE Committee at Bremen Elementary School. The engineering is now under way and we are working toward a time line for completion. This grant is 100% funded by ODOT and there is no expenditure on the part of the Village.

The new handicap lift chair was installed at the swimming pool this year, meeting all compliance criteria for public swimming pools. It was used several times by those with special needs. We want to be accessible for any and all who visit our municipal pool.

As I speak, we are receiving six new handicap ramps at Marietta and Purvis, and Marietta at Oak and Angle Streets. This was courtesy of our receiving a Community Development Block

Grant of $39,600. A special thank you goes to our County Commissioners and the Regional Planning Commission for making this happen.

The Council has had to make a hard decision concerning our sewer fund. There is an Ordinance before council to put a sewer rate increase in place beginning February 1st of 2014. A copy of the Ordinance is available upon request.

At the present, the recycling center at the Village Office continues. We are using three dumpsters and filling them every week. However, because of the cost incurred, we are working with the Community Action Recycle Center to make a change where there will be no cost to the Village.

To date, we have grant funding requests in process. One is for the soccer fields, another is for the replacing of curbs and gutters on Strayer Ave. In 2014, we will resubmit a funding request to ODOT for new curbs and sidewalks on West Main St. With this project there is no in-kind labor allowed and the Village's match is in the $78,000 range. We will only resubmit if we can see the funding of this $78,000 on the part of the Village.

Speaking of ODOT, we have received confirmation of the complete resurfacing of Rt. 664 (Broad Street) in the Spring of 2014. This will be from Rt 37 all the way through town to the waste water treatment plant. It is at no cost to the Village.

This year has seen the Village continue to meet the EPA mandate for storm pipe installation as we continue to separate our storm water sewer from the sanitary sewer. We are 85% finished with this mandate. By doing the work ourselves, we have saved somewhere in the vicinity of $2,500,000 - $3,000,000 over the past number of years.

In closing, I want to recognize our Village workers. With me saying their names, it still does not do justice. I am asking all of you to voice your appreciation when you see them. First, Gary Wolfe who is our crew leader on the streets and his workers Douglas Ditter and Mike Clark. They have worked tirelessly to keep up with the regular work in the Village while performing the tedious task of repositioning the bricks on Fort Street. They give 110% every day and

deserve our praise and thanks. Second, to Byron Bowersox and Ed Hammond who head up the water and waste water plants as well as the placing of storm sewer pipe. They give 110% every day and are on call 24/7 for leaks and breaks in the piping system and deserve our praise and thanks. Third, to Fran Drake who not only handles the Utility Billing for Bremen but has taken on the Utility Billing for Rushville. She works tirelessly to make sure the bills are correct and communicates with the residents. Fran handles all the deposits for Bremen and Rushville and is excellent in making sure everything balances. Fran also serves as the Administrative Assistant to our Village Administrator. She give 110% every day and deserves our praise and thanks. Let these workers know they are appreciated.

We are facing a new day. There are many successes and yet many challenges that lie ahead. I am confident that our leadership is up to the task and our Council will make the best decisions for the good of the whole village. We will work to maintain stability with finances as well as services for our residents. I am looking forward to 2014 and our continuing successes.

Josh Groce, Mayor
Village of Bremen