MAYOR'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

There are major projects underway and we have two projects at the top of our list.

One is the FEMA hillside slippage remediation task impacting houses and families on North and South Sherry streets, Taylor Avenue, and perhaps others.

I've heard from several citizens that they are frustrated that the project has taken so long. Everyone I have talked to has expressed they are not happy with the slow rate of progress.

This is a complex project with a number of moving parts. It involves federal FEMA dollars, state involvement, advanced payments for reimbursed costs, cost sharing, easements and, yes, the actual design and construction of three major retention walls.

I hear the frustration. I want the City to take some action with due diligence.

The City Administrator reviewed the plans in January, and went to the project site to take a look at it. He wasn't working for Bellevue at the time, but we wanted to try to get things moving as soon as possible. We established a meeting with the geo-technical engineer the first week in February. We are considering whether to hire a project engineer to manage the construction project. Believe when I say, we hear the frustration, and we want to help move this along the best we can.

The second project on our list is the development of the riverfront near Harbor Greene that the City now owns. This hits our list as both a problem and opportunity.

The City now owes about $6 million in General Obligation bonds on this section of Bellevue. Some of this debt is from the previous development in this area. And, some of this debt is being paid by the taxes generated by the increased value of real property generated as a development.

The previous administration was working with a firm from Louisville to possibly develop the City's newly acquired property along the riverfront between Fairfield and the Ohio River. This is a key development site for the City, and it's important that we take a thoughtful and prudent approach.

There was a proposed development agreement that was being discussed. I think it's safe to say that a majority of the City Council, Frank and myself agree that we need to take a hard look at any proposed development agreement and make sure that we do the best we can to make sure that whatever goes in the space is the highest and best use for the citizens of Bellevue.

With that in mind, I will be appointing a task force to include Councilperson Sean Fisher, along with Mike Brandy, Jay Buchert, Neal Morris, Steve Crawford, and another developer representative I am still trying to recruit and get on board. They will be charged with planning and designing the whole riverfront area of Bellevue by emphasizing the Harbor Greene section which we will start first. This 30-year plan will serve as a guideline for the direction we plan to take in the future. At least three of the members of this

team have experience with development. They will design something that people will want to buy and developers will want to build.

Those are two of the "major" projects that we are going to be working on, but we have many others to push forward. They are all important.

One is the City needs a barber! We recently lost our two barbers to retirement. Frank says every city needs a Floyd the Barber.

Some of our new City Council members would like to see free wi-fi in Bellevue. This is something we can work on to increase access to the internet for our citizens and visitors.

Open communication with our residents is another direction we are trying to improve.

Our goal is to bring positivity back to Bellevue.

I have been meeting with Bellevue Veterans and Cincinnati Reds representatives to try to help the Vets facilitate the makeover of the Bellevue Veterans ballfields. The Reds organization is almost ready to start the ballfield improvements. This is a great project for the youth of the City and Northern Kentucky.

Our tree board is back in business. Trees are a big part of the fabric of our city, and I know that many of our key stakeholders are interested in maintaining and improving the trees in Bellevue.

In case you are wondering where Lincoln Road is on our list, it is No. 3. Lincoln Road is a major project that has had a few bumps along the way if you will forgive the pun.

The last topic of discussion will be the most enjoyable. We are now preparing for the 150th Anniversary of Bellevue that occurs in 2020. It will be here before you know it.