

## FAIRVIEW PARK

## Safety, beautification, expansion on mind of city and school officials

By BRIAN LOVE

A member of the community heard the young child yelling.

“Call 9-1-1.”

Being the responsible person, the person knew the child was in trouble last summer. Springing to action, the call was made.

Within minutes, two police cars arrived on the scene.

Instead of a crime scene, the call was one of innocence.

“It was a child practicing the ‘9-1-1 Song’ they’re taught at Safety Town,” recalled Mayor Patrick Cooney. A few minutes early, the third-year mayor had serenaded the large gathering with the song taught last summer at the program.

It was a moment of levity during an evening in which the mayor and Superintendent of Schools Keith Ahearn presented the second Combined State of the City and State of the Schools Addresses.

After being entertained by the Fairview High School Chamber Orchestra, the crowd of several hundred at the Gemini Center last Thursday heard the pair talk of pride in what the city and

schools have achieved in the past year.

Cooney spoke of projects that have come as a result of grants. Among the grants were about \$3.8 million for the new Coe Creek Bridge, a new van for the Senior Center and trees for tree lawns. The city and school district have worked together for the Safe Routes To School travel plan update.

“The city used grant funds to upgrade the 2014 travel plan,” Cooney said. “A new plan was developed as it is in the process of being adopted by the city council. Based on that plan, the city has requested \$275,000 from ODOT to implement recommended safety improvements to the roadways that surround the roadways about Gilles-Sweet (Elementary School.) We appreciate the collaboration with the schools and making our community students safer.”

Safety was a concern with Ahearn. With many tragic events taking place at schools, an emphasis was placed on making the city school safer.

Grants provided upgrades to security cameras, eliminating blind spots. Other upgrades include artificial intelligence that provide facial and vehicle recognition, new doors in

high-traffic areas at Fairview High School and Lewis Mayer Middle School.

There is also glass laminate to the entrances of the board of education and Gillis-Sweet to make it more difficult to forcibly enter these buildings.

New visitor management systems are being installed to keep track of visitors, along with an emergency system that would instantly notify first responders.

“The horrific tragedies we continue to see across the country obligate us to coordinate action,” Ahearn said. “It is not only about safety. We must continue to invest in things that impact school and community climate and culture, while also planning for response, recovery and reunification in the event of a tragedy.”

Safety wasn’t the only concern mentioned by Ahearn. The improved academic progress of the students was something that was pointed out.

The state will be using a five-star rating system in five categories to judge schools, Ahearn said.

“While an overall star rating for each district will not be issued until next fall,” Ahearn said, “we are excited to share that, based on

our results in the five component areas, the Fairview Park City school district would have achieved an overall four-star rating exceeding state standards.”

Some of the plans for 2023 for the city include:

Plans for repairing the natatorium in the Gemini Center. “In my mind, the most important thing for our community is quality, which is going to take time based on the issues that have been discovered time and time again, in response to the pool, here at the Gemini center,” Cooney said. “On the street, people approached me and told me that they want the pools fixed right. The timing the investigations have revealed a lot of helpful and important information that will be beneficial as this process concludes and the pools move into a design phase.”

The first Fairview Food Festival will take place on July 15 on the Fairview city square, a stretch of Lorain Road that features independent and diverse restaurants. “This festival will be a great exposure for our restaurants,” Cooney said. “It’s a chance to showcase Lorain Road and to promote Fairview Park.”