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SHELBY TWP.

Township address highlights expanded services, reduced costs

As the central theme of his 2016 State of the Township Address on July 13, Shelby Township Supervisor Richard Stathakis touted his community's ability to expand services and infrastructure for residents without the need to raise taxes.

To open his remarks, Stathakis outlined the balancing of 2015 budgets in the township's General Fund, Police Fund and Fire Fund for only the second time since 2002 - without the need to ask taxpayers for more revenue.

"Without having your finances in order, you can't have anything," Stathakis said. "In 2015, Shelby Township had all major funds in the black, and it marked the seventh consecutive year of surpluses for our General Fund.

"And speaking of surpluses, our Police Department, thanks to the leadership of Police Chief Robert Shelide, had a surplus of more than \$1 million in 2015. This raised its rainy day fund balance to almost \$2.2 million."

Stathakis also remarked that a major factor in balancing the Police and Fire departments' finances was historic reform to the police and fire pension system that was spearheaded by Township Treasurer Michael Flynn.

"This year, we will realize more than \$800,000 of pension savings for the Police and Fire departments due to pension reform in 2014," Stathakis said. "My hat is off to Treasurer Flynn and the entire Board of Trustees for this effort and for successfully negotiating it with the unions."

Stathakis said that, because of the reforms to the pension system and the reduction in long-term costs associated with staffing the public safety departments, the township was able to hire new police officers and firefighters in 2015 at a reduced overall cost.

"To put the pension reform into perspective, if a firefighter retired in 2000 under the old system, he or she put roughly \$18,000 into the pension system," Stathakis said. "To date, since his or her re-

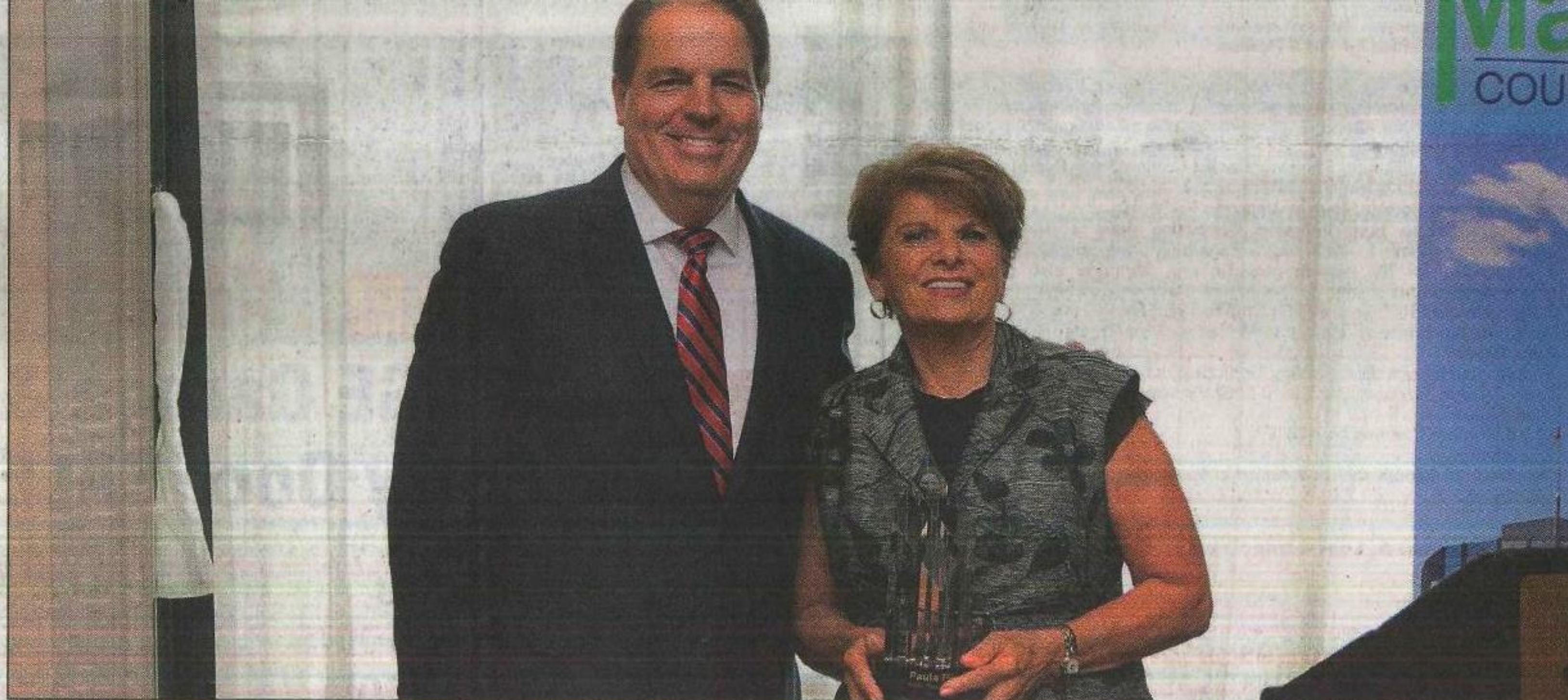


PHOTO COURTESY OF SHELBY TOWNSHIP

Shelby Township Supervisor Richard Stathakis shares a smile with Trustee Paula Filar at the 2016 State of the Township Address on July 13 at the Palazzo Grande.

tirement, that retiree would have cashed out an excess of \$1 million, and he or she could collect an additional \$1 million in the next few years depending on how he or she lives.

"Now, our new hires do not come with an extended cost to police and fire - all new employees in the Police and Fire departments since 2014 have a 401k type program which means that Shelby Township will not be on the hook into the future."

Stathakis said that, with the reduction in personnel costs, the township has been able to expand infrastructure with investments such as the new \$4 million police headquarters, a \$3.2 million renovation of Fire Station No. 1 and plans for a new \$1.9 million Fire Station No. 5 with no increase in taxes.

"By the end of 2016 or the first quarter of 2017, we will have a new Fire Station No. 5 for \$1.9 million that will be built, staffed and equipped with no tax increase - and paid in cash," Stathakis said. "This is possible because Chief Jim Swinkowski understands finances and accounting better than any fire chief in the state.

"Chief Swinkowski makes use

of efficiencies to reduce operational costs to expand his department without cost increases to taxpayers."

Stathakis said the same approach that has netted such cost reductions and service expansion in the public safety departments is also employed by the rest of the township as it expands quality of life measures in the community recreation program, parks and trails.

"Since 2008, we have saved the township \$1 million per year in employee reductions," Stathakis said. "That is \$1 million, annually, that we can reinvest in making our township a better place to live."

Stathakis highlighted \$40 million in new and improved roads in the township, the new Chief Gene Shepherd Park and expansion to the trail system that now connects River Bends Park to Lake St. Clair.

"Since 2008, we've built more than \$40 million in new and improved roads, which has been almost 80 percent funded through county and federal funds," Stathakis said. "We also have miles and miles of new hike and bike trails funded by state and federal grants. And thanks to Trea-

surer Flynn and the Parks and Recreation Committee, we have the beautified new \$1 million Gene Shepherd Park, also paid in cash with no tax increase."

Stathakis said that, while there is no firm plan in place, he also expects to see significant steps toward resolving the township's top priority for 2016: "address community center needs."

"I know that some people want a new, state-of-the-art recreation center similar to what Macomb Township has and to what Sterling Heights is planning," Stathakis said. "What they may not realize, though, is a facility like that would cost the owner of a \$200,000 home in Shelby Township an additional \$200 per year on their tax bill.

"We know for certain that we need to address the situation with our senior center and our library, and we will."

"But we will not raise taxes to do so because we don't need to," he said. "What we will do is stay true to our conservative principles, and get the job done without increasing taxes."

Another portion of the supervisor's address recognized individuals from the community that have worked to make the township "a

better place."

This year's honorees included:

- The Shelby Township Lions Club (represented by Ray Confer), which was honored by the veterans events coordinator for making Shelby Township a "Better Place to Live."

- Dan Lehman, who was honored by Clerk Stan Grot for his work establishing the township's Historical Society website (shelby-history.com) and making Shelby Township a "Better Place to Learn."

- Joanne Burgess, who was honored by Flynn for making Shelby Township a "Better Place to Play."

- Economic Development Advisory Committee volunteers Phillip Rugerri, Thomas Guastello and Daniel Stern, who were recognized by Planning Director Glenn Wynn for making Shelby Township a "Better Place to do Business."

"We have a lot of things going for us here in Shelby Township such as our parks, our stable, conservative board and our growing tax base, but what sets Shelby Township apart are the people in our community," Stathakis said. "We would not have amazing news to share with the world if we did not have even more amazing people making it happen."