

First, let me say thank you to members of the Kiwanis Club for allowing me the opportunity to share the State of the City with you.

Together the Club and the City have partnered to become a Flag City USA—the first in the nation. A proclamation establishing this prestigious honor has come from both the Tennessee Legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives. We are a patriotic community and are proud of the core values that make our nation great. I appreciate our partnership.

Before I give you this year's report, I want to answer a question I have been asked many times: are you going to seek re-election?

In September 2008, I humbly and proudly became Cleveland's longest serving Mayor, surpassing the term of the late Harry Dethero. I would hope I have represented you in a way to make you proud and that I have been nothing but positive about our City. Together we have made a lot of progress and will continue to be the best we can be. Therefore, I want to answer that question today and let you know I will be a candidate for re-election and will be making a formal announcement soon.

We, in this room, all realize how blessed we are in this community because we are all in tune with the news and what we have achieved and the great future ahead. But it is always good to hear what visitors and officials from other cities have to say about us. And this past year, Cleveland has been in the national spotlight several times by way of national publications.

Let me now review some of the positive national publicity our City has received from those who do not live here and who can put our positive values in prospective.

You will recall last year I shared with you a front page article from USA Today with a headline that read: "Cleveland, Tennessee Number One." We beat out cities like Honolulu and Tulsa in being the best place in the nation to own a home. Later we read in Business Week that we were listed 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation out of 50 cities recognized for our quality of life, low cost of living and environment to raise a family. Then Forbes had Cleveland listed as Number# 88 in the nation as the "best city for business and career." For three consecutive issues this past year, Great Places to Live Magazine gave Cleveland a glowing review as a city that has maintained a small town feel, yet offers big city amenities. Let me read just one paragraph from that magazine: "More than anything, Cleveland, TN is a fast growing city that has managed to maintain the attributes necessary in preserving its hometown feel and small town values. It is full of friendly faces and people who still wave when driving through the neighborhoods and speak to strangers when passing on a sidewalk. Cleveland maintains a high quality of life for the people who call it home and has certain magnetism to visitors, who often return to call it home."

We have received accolades for downtown development from Southeast Tennessee Resource Publication, and just recently MSNBC reported that Cleveland is the only metro area out of 10 in Tennessee, showing a decisive path on the road to economic recovery. The report further showed that out of the nations some 400 metro areas, Cleveland is in the top 100. These things make me proud and I hope you are as well.

No one person can take credit for these accolades. The important fact is these words came not from us, but from outside our city and state, from those who recognize our achievements and our potential.

Your City Government is healthy...For the 21<sup>TH</sup> consecutive year, the City Department of Finance and Administration has received a CERTIFICATE OF Achievement OF EXCELLENCE IN FINANCIAL REPORTING AND THE DISTINGUISHED BUDGET PRESENTATION AWARD. THIS IS THANKS TO CITY MANAGER JANICE CASTEEL AND FINANCE DIRECTOR MIKE KEITH AND OUR CITY STAFF. . .

This past year, we cut energy costs by 15% in all our city buildings and continuing efforts toward further energy reductions

The City of Cleveland continues to be financially sound. The City audit approved this week shows the last property tax increase was in 2002 going from \$1.56 per \$100 of assessed value to \$1.65. Most recently it was reduced to \$1.49 after the recent Bradley County re-appraisals. The audit showed the City's assets had grown from \$160 million in 2002 to almost \$204 million, ending June 30, 2009. Local sales tax has increased 35.6% since 2000, from \$6.1 million to \$8.3 million on June 30, 2009 ending of the last fiscal year. While retail sales are down in many cities, our sales tax increase shows we are quickly becoming a regional shopping area.

You might be interested to know who Cleveland's largest property taxpayers are. Here are the top 7 – Master Foods USA, Whirlpool, Community Health Systems, Life Care Centers of America, Duracell, Peyton's Southeastern and Schering-Plough.

Under Tennessee State Law, the City's outstanding general obligation debt is not limited. However the City has established its own financial policy limit of no more than 10% of assessed property value. With assessed property value at \$980,743,876, the City could easily carry a debt of \$98,074,388; however the present bonded debt is \$64,921,560.

During 2009 Cleveland, through its public works Department, using in house labor and design, saved tax payers thousands of dollars by widening and paving North Ocoee Street, completing three detention ponds for flood relief throughout the City, covered several dangerous streets with non skid cover, paved in other areas, improved drainage with curbs, gutters and sidewalks.

The City and County worked together on a new fire contract, and also worked together to complete our beautiful new Public library to be dedicated next month.

The city and county agreed on a new urban growth area, which now allows the city to provide infrastructure and roads to new industrial and commercial areas as we continue to grow.

The City of Cleveland and Bradley County have worked together in many areas to benefit all our citizens.

The Greenway expansion continues. A restroom will soon be constructed and a playground has just been completed. Much of this has been done through public and private partnerships.

The City continues to provide pedestrian friendly walking areas with new sidewalks in various part of the City, thanks in part to a \$248,700 grant under the 2009 Safe Route to School program.

First Street Square Park will begin February 1, followed by restoration plans for the The Depot. A new addition to North East Recreation Center is underway. And this Sunday, we break ground for the Max Carroll Science Wing at Cleveland High School.

We received grants in 2009 which enabled us to add new firefighters and police officers to improve public safety. Our Cleveland Police Department, just a few months ago, received national certification for its professionalism. Our Fire Department now responds to emergencies for extrication at crashes and offers first medical response..

Synchronization of traffic signals through an Intelligent Transportation System Grant is nearing completion. This will allow our Traffic Department to better control traffic flow in case of emergencies and other traffic backups.

The City has received Federal Recovery Act Funds to pave Raider Drive, a portion Freewill Road, new restroom facilities on the Greenway and new sidewalk segments along Walker Street, First Street, Central Avenue, Edwards Street and Raider Drive.

The City was notified this week by the Tennessee Department of Transportation that North Ocoee Street will be resurfaced beginning at Broad Street, all the way to North Lee Highway. The State has accelerated this paving project by 3 years which will allow the City to extend the widening of North Ocoee.

This week the City, in cooperation with Lee University, is installing a street-illuminated cross walk on Ocoee Street at 14<sup>th</sup> Street. This will allow motorists to be more aware of pedestrians as they enter the crosswalk. The project has been delayed for a few days due to colder weather, prohibiting the pouring of concrete.

Another major achievement for our community is the funding of a million dollars each from Cleveland and Bradley County to keep, as well as to add new jobs, to our Cleveland Whirlpool plant.

There are at least three new intersections slated for traffic signals to better enhance safe travel. This week, I was authorized to sign an agreement for professional engineering services for the new interchange on APD 40.

Bradley County, Cleveland and Charleston, along with our Chamber of Commerce, continue to work toward economic development. Wacker Chemie is the result of those efforts. I had a conversation last Friday with Dr. Ingomar Kovar, WACKER CEO, who said the engineering for plant construction is underway and on schedule. They recently received a \$128 million energy credit from the Federal Government. Dr. Kovar said work must be completed on time in order not to lose these energy credits.

With the coming of WACKER to our North, and Volkswagen to the South, Cleveland and Bradley County are in a unique position to grow jobs. Soon, Cleveland will be only 6 miles from Chattanooga – city limit to city limit.

Tourism plays a big role in our economic development. A 2009 study commissioned by the State's Department of Tourist Development reports that expenditures in Bradley County exceeded \$108 million plus 8 and a half million dollars in local and state sales taxes. The Convention and Visitors Bureau of the Chamber, led by Melissa Woody, places ads in various regional and national publications promoting Cleveland, Bradley County and the Ocoee region. This year, the Convention and Visitors Bureaus received more than 46,000 requests for information about our area.

The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development began efforts to expand the National Civil War Trails Program to Tennessee. In anticipation of the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War and in light of the large number of heritage sites in Tennessee, participation has been amazing. Civil War markers for Bradley County were placed at the Museum Center at Five Points and in the Charleston City Park. The markers indicate the importance of the railroad in Cleveland and the bridge in Charleston to war strategy. All 3 local governments and local historical societies were instrumental in acquiring the markers. (Lincoln remarks?)

With over 63 nationalities now living here, diversity is a major issue. I guess I first became aware of this tremendous impact of the diversity here with the international students now attending our two colleges, Lee University and Cleveland State Community College. Resources from both schools have played a tremendous role in our economic and community development.

A lot has been accomplished in a year, but we have a long way to go. I could touch on many other areas of success, but I have only highlighted some. Please keep in mind how much your city provides you with the lowest property tax rates of any City in Tennessee with a K-12 school system.

Our Cleveland Urban Transit System continues to grow and serve transportation needs of many. The new General Aviation Airport is closer than ever with groundbreaking scheduled in March. I can't say enough about our Cleveland Municipal Airport Authority and the work they have done to move us into the modern age of aviation – long overdue.

Bradley County is well on its way to acquiring a new Veterans Home. It is being made possible by an anonymous donor giving \$3 million, a commitment of \$4 million from the City and County and countless private contributions. The proposed Veterans Home has moved higher on the federal and state priority list. Thanks to Rep. Kevin Brooks who introduced the resolution, now signed by the governor, our home is ranked as #1 priority in the Tennessee.

I am still working on plans for a Veterans Park off 25<sup>th</sup> Street on Veterans Memorial Parkway on property donated for the purpose by developers of Spring Creek. We suspended fundraising for the park temporarily so as not to interfere with efforts of fundraising for the Veterans Home. But we are still working on the project and will have more about it later. (55 trees-seed money)

I am still working toward a formal dedication of Billy Graham Avenue, off North Ocoee, which commemorates the time the evangelist lived in Cleveland. We are waiting confirmation for a member of the Graham family to be present for the event. We would like to have Cliff Barrows since he also attended college here. He is music director for all Billy Graham Crusades.

One final comment: Let us all support the Census. It's important that everyone is counted in order to qualify for funding of schools, roads, and other necessities.

The City of Cleveland has accomplished much, but there is still much to be done. It's up to each of us to assure our great City continues to have a reputation of quality of life for our future generations.

Thank you Kiwanians for the contributions you make toward this **city's quality of life.....**