Mayor's Journal: February 16-22

As I sit at my computer today, my mind reflects on the time when I had no computer, had no email and I wonder if life and my job is easier or more difficult now that I seem to be attached to this electronic device. Such is the nature of progress. Sometimes I want to go back to those days of yellow legal pads, face to face conversations and hand written or typed correspondence. What a wonderful world we live in and what incredible progress we have made, but may we never forget the importance of personal contact...a lesson for me and a lesson for all.

February 16: I usually start my week with the Policy meeting, but this Monday City Hall was closed and I worked from home on that magical machine to which I referred above. I caught up on my e-mails and worked on my calendar and then my wife, Patti and I took in a movie and then went to my Mom's for dinner; we try to go each Monday, if only for a short visit and always for some good home cooking. So, Monday was a somewhat laid -back day to watch the snow melt and have a little family time.

February 17: Tuesday became the Monday of this week and the hectic schedule began. Shayla and I met with Tony Bozynski, Housing Director and Brian Minyard from Planning to discuss the South End neighborhood meeting scheduled for February 23.

Later, we met with Bessie Jackson, HUD's Little Rock Field Director, Sallie Shipman, Southwest Regional Coordinator for HUD, and Sharon Priest, Downtown Partnership Director, to discuss the plans for addressing the Homeless needs in our city and area. We have a partnership with the St. Francis House to expand hours of service, but we are working with HUD and the Downtown Partnership to develop long term solutions.

We had a meeting with Carlette Henderson to discuss the work of our Racial and Cultural Diversity Commission. This wonderful Commission, has an aggressive program on Diversity Training and is planning its major annual event for the fall called World Fest. If you would like more information on the work of the commission, it is available on the Little Rock Web site.

We had a meeting to discuss the specifics of the CAP (Criminal Abatement Program). This meeting included Police Chief Lawrence Johnson, the City Attorney, the Assistant Police Chief, the City Manager, the Housing Director and the Assistant to the Mayor. We discussed the agenda for this Friday's Targeted Neighborhood Day in Southwest Little Rock.

We finished the day with our City Board meeting and reconvened meeting to take final action on the rezoning request at Chenal and Highway 10. The scaled down rezoning was approved after much discussion and only after the applicant reduced the project size from nearly 100 acres to 17 acres.

February 18: Wednesday was quite busy with a great announcement at the offices of Flake Wilkerson. Flake-Wilkerson will hire about 150 employees to service a new

contract with telcom giant, Qwest...great news for Little Rock. The City Manager and I met with a local business man to discuss a new business prospect in downtown. I will keep you posted. Later in the day, I met with a UALR student majoring in journalism to discuss the possible relocation of Travelers Field to a downtown location...more on this in later issues.

February 19: This morning began at the Leadership Greater Little Rock class session on Government and Politics. I spoke, along with Judge Villines and North Little Rock's City Attorney on local politics and what a difference we can make at a local level. Shayla is in this year's class, which is in its 19th year and was founded when Paul Harvel, Chamber of Commerce President, came to me and suggested we look into developing this program, which he had participated in before he came to Arkansas. At that point, I made some calls and received funding to get the first class going. Since then, it has become a competitive process and many local and state leaders, as well as, business and community leaders from Central Arkansas have gone through. The purpose of the program is to develop young business people into the next great leaders of our city, state and possibly country. It lasts one year and they meet about broad topics that relate to the city and state. The Chamber, particularly Judy Knod, has done an excellent job in promoting and expanding each year's class.

Next, I made a presentation to the Poultry Federation at the Peabody attempting to entice this group to bring their large convention to Little Rock in 2005. The Little Rock Convention and Visitor's Bureau does a great job in enticing groups into our city.

I wrapped up with a fun meeting with Lexie and her mother, Stacey. Lexie is a 10 year old student doing a school project...in this case a interview with the Mayor. I must say I was delighted with this visit. I always enjoy these type of meetings.

February 20: Friday morning, Shayla and I met with the Mayor's Youth Council Director, Kim White, to discuss plans for the council for the balance of this year. The Council works at various events each month for community service.

At noon, I attended a luncheon with City of Little Rock staff and City Board members for the dedication of the new Kendall Science and Health Mission Center at Philander Smith College. Dr. Trudie Reed and her Board have done a magnificent job on generating a new look and spirit at this historic education center.

February 22: On Sunday, in addition to family matters, I met for lunch with the Sister Cities Commission as we hosted a gathering with the Mayor of Changchun, China. This year is the 10th anniversary of the Sister City relationship with Little Rock and Changchun and it was great to meet Mayor Zou. Renie Rule and Carmen McHaney have done a tremendous job with the commission and I appreciate their hard work and dedication to keeping our relationships alive. Our other sister cities are: Ragusa, Italy; Kaohsiung, Taiwan; Hanam City, Korea; and Mons, Belgium with Friendship Citys of La Petite Pierre, France and Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, England.