Mayor's Journal March 7-13:

Wow...what a week...I felt like spring had arrived and to drive around town and see the beautiful blossoms appearing, is simply awesome.

Sunday, March 7: Upon arrival in Little Rock from Washington, D.C., I went directly to the finish line of the second annual Little Rock Marathon. Even though I only saw those who were arriving at seven hours or more, it was incredible. Some of the runners, after struggling for the full 26.2 miles were showing signs of toil, but their faces also had the magnificent look of accomplishment. I even overheard one woman ...literally in tears, because she was so proud she had actually completed the marathon. I am certain there were and are hundreds of personal stories about why one runs and what one feels upon completion. The marathon was a great success with a huge increase in numbers, as well as, a special event for kids. I am proud of the runners, but equally proud of the hundreds of volunteers and City staff that made this a successful event. In my opinion, this will grow into a huge community event in the years to come.

Monday, March 8: As usual, I had my Monday morning policy meeting with City Management. In these meetings, we discuss the work of the week, agenda for our City Board meetings and any hot topics of the moment.

Following this meeting, I went to UALR to hear the report done by the University on Racial Attitudes in Central Arkansas. There is still plenty of work to be done, but the survey showed that much progress has been made and that there is a sense of optimism and hope. My thanks to Dr. Anderson and his staff for the committment to our community. The numerous partnerships with UALR are truly important to our future.

I had a meeting with a major developer about plans for a development in Little Rock and hopefully there will be an announcement very soon.

Later in the day, I had a planning meeting with staff from Community Programs to discuss the technical assistance grant about after school programs. More about this in a bit.

Monday evening, my wife, daughter and I had dinner at my mother's. If one ever looks at my calendar, of note, is the recurring entry on Monday...dinner at Mom's. I mention this because I know that the only way to make something be a part of my calendar is to give it a slot. I also know that it is easy to let important people and events slip without attention if we don't make room for them in our busy schedules.

Tuesday, March 9: This morning, I went to the Arkansas Fair Housing Seminar held in Maumelle. I was particularly interested in this because the City of Little Rock was one of the leaders in the effort to establish a fair housing ordinance or law in our city and state. Fortunately, the Arkansas legislature created a Fair Housing Commission charged with the duties to administer fair housing complaints in the State. Now, Arkansas citizens can be assured these complaints have the full attention of this appointed commission. Little Rock's Annie Abrams is the Chair of this new commission.

Tuesday evening, we had our agenda meeting and a reconvened meeting. We had several presentations including a recognition of the Pulaski Academy AAA State Football Champions. We had presentations about the St. Patrick's Day Parade and once again, the National League of Cities After-school Initiative grant.

Finally, we went into executive session to make appointments to the citizen's accountability commission..."Continue the Progress Committee". This 15-member committee will follow and monitor the progress on all the projects approved in November by renewing the Capital Bond Issue. In addition, our Finance Director showed us how any citizen can go to the our City website and get up to the minute information on the expenditures and progress of each bond project. One can also get financial reports on line. Truly, one of the most important things we can do as elected officials, is make sure you know what we are doing with your money....our finance dept is doing just that.

Wednesday, March 10: The day began with a breakfast I hosted for school officials, city officials and community based organizations to report on the progress of the NLC grant I mentioned earlier. Little Rock was chosen as one of six cities in the nation to be part of this technical assistance grant...the goal being to coordinate after school activities and programs. I am excited that we were chosen and we have a grand opportunity to partner with various groups, learn from other cities and provide more effective after school programming for our youth.

All should know by now that the primary focus of mine and the City Board for this year is Public Safety...I have told you about targeted neighborhood initiatives. Well, on Wednesday afternoon, I spent several hours doing a ride along with one of our police officers. Officer Bill Cobb has been very active in the central city neighborhoods and, along with other officers, has worked with me on the special targeted programs. We toured some of the spots where crime had been the highest and where we have seen dramatic success as a result of coordinated efforts between codes enforcement, police, the attorney's office and the neighborhood residents. We had the chance to stop and visit with neighbors and to view some of the continuing problem spots.

Thursday, March 11: I began the day with a debriefing by our community programs department on the Afterschool Programs Grant. Again, my thanks to W.J. Monagle for his efforts in seeing this become a success!

I then had a meeting with the Executive Director of the Waste Water Utility to discuss their building needs. I participated in the ground breaking of the new United States Court House at Capitol and Broadway. This building will be named in the honor of Judge Richard Arnold of Little Rock. Judge Arnold is one of the most respected and admired individuals of our time and I am particularly pleased with this much deserved recognition. In addition, we will continue the building boom in our central business district with this $80 million dollar project.

Later in the day, I met with a representative from Johnson Controls to review a presentation I will make to Metroplan about the energy conservation measures the City has done in the past two years. We are now saving more than $300 thousand dollars per year in utility costs and also have more energy efficient and environmentally friendly buildings.

Friday, March 12: Today was largely spent working on "desk work", but the city mananger and I met with Little Rock School Interim Superintendant this morning. This is a meeting we have monthly and it has meant a great deal in the working relationship between our two groups. In April, we will have a joint meeting between our city board and the school board. This is something we try to do several times a year...once again it has meant a lot to the working relationship.

I had a meeting with a local businessman discussing a new technology to get information out to people in the event of a crisis, natural or otherwise...then more phone calls and paper work and finished with interviews and discussion about crime statistics in Little Rock.

Saturday, March 13: My sole city duty was to participate in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. It was a bit cool and a bit damp, but City Director Brad Cazort and I thoroughly enjoyed our walk from MacArthur Park to the Rivermarket accompanied by some 70 bands, floats, river dance groups and other parade entries. It was a ball and fortunately, the parade finished as the heavy rain began...the "luck of the Irish".

I hope you have a great week ... I appreciate your interest.