Mayor's Journal March 23-April 2:

For this journal entry and possibly for some in the future, I will briskly go through highlights of the past week. Then, I will give you a more detailed update on specific issues or topics on which I am spending the majority of my time and energy. Today, I will focus on Crime and what we are doing to address it.

As to the brisk highlights, there were several of special note:

First, was the unveiling of the "Continue the Progress" sign in the John Barrow area. This and the initial meeting of the citizens based Progress Committee, are significant in that you will know where your tax dollars from the 2004 Bond Issue are being spent. Each and every project will be identified by one of these signs, so don't be surprised as they start showing up all over town. You will see them at street and drainage projects as well as parks, zoo, convention center, animal shelter, fire stations and much more. In addition, the eleven-member citizen committee will meet frequently to monitor, advise and report to the public on the progress of the projects.

Other important events included a meeting with the President and CEO of American Eagle Airlines to discuss service connections in and out of Little Rock National Airport, participation in the Board and Secure Day with the Mayor's Youth Council and City staff, the kick off for Fox 16 news at 9 event, dinner with the American Taekwando Association to discuss the Little Rock World Championship, the Jermain Taylor fight, the First Security topping out ceremony in the River Market District, various events with the National Tour Association and last, but not least, attendance at the hearing before the Arkansas Supreme Court on the Use Tax Case. Each of these deserves a full paragraph or two, but today, I wanted to get to the issue of crime in your city and what we are doing about it.

The fact is, once again crime is on the increase in our city. I can give you all kinds of thoughts on "why" and try to make you feel better by reminding you we are still 25% lower for 2003 than that all time high year…1993, but crime has been increasing and dealing with this increase is the number one priority of mine as Mayor, of the City Board of Directors and of City management. We dealt with it successfully in the 90's and we will not fail in 2004. If there is any good news…and there is some…it is the dramatic decrease in the crimes committed by juveniles compared with 1993. We have seen a decrease of almost 50% and I am convinced, our Prevention, Intervention and Treatment programs are working. The other point which makes this year different from 1993 is we are more prepared. You authorized a one-half penny sales tax in 1993 to fund the hiring of 135 police officers, increase codes enforcement, fund PIT programs and build Alert Centers in the neighborhoods. That infrastructure, along with neighborhood associations puts us well ahead of the curve in responding to increased crime. Granted, an overcrowded jail, and vacant slots in the LRPD due to the war in Iraq, makes this a challenge, but we are systematically using the tools you provided in '93.

TOOLS AND ACTION STEPS TO ADDRESS CRIME INCREASE:

- - Utilizing 10 School Resource Officers in a gang awareness effort. Gangs have declined since the '90's but there is some indication of activity again.
- - Aggressive, graffiti inspection, identification and removal program. If you see it, report it.
- - Reassignment of personnel from administrative to enforcement assignments.
- - Hiring and training of 40 new police officers.
- - Two SWAT squads and the Mobile COPP unit reassigned to targeted enforcement actions.
- - Implemented a Special Robbery Squad consisting of 5 officers.
- - Initiated Project Safe Neighborhood in cooperation with the US Attorney and ATF.
- - Cross training of Patrol Officers and Burglary Detectives.
- - Implemented the Community Safety Initiative to help parolees adjust to life in the community. (this helps reduce recidivism)
- - Continue to work with community groups such as the Black on Black Crime Coalition.
- - We are developing a Internet Crimes against Children Task Force in cooperation with other law enforcement agencies.
- - Continue the ComStat system to gather data and target criminal activity based on statistical information. The Chief has regular meetings for updates from his command staff.
- - Move forward with the Communications system upgrades. This is part of the 2004 Bond Issue.
- - Install the Neighborhood Camera System in areas of highest criminal activity. Also part of the Bond Issue.
- - Address the disproportionate number of false alarm calls in order to free officers for patrol and response to true alarm calls. 97% of the 28,548 alarm calls in '03 were false.
- - Develop a take-home car program and other incentives to encourage officer residency in the city.
- - Implement a Reserve Officer Program to utilize recent LRPD retirees.
- - Initiate a Detoxification Center which would free up jail space.
- - Initiate a Truancy Center.
- - $100,000. dollars to begin a effort to address the issues of the increasing homeless in our city.

CODES ENFORCEMENT AND COURT ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CRIME INDICATORS:

- - Continue the A.C.E. (Aggressive Code Enforcement). This utilizes specific teams for enforcement.
- - Rental Inspection Team does systematic rental inspections and re-inspections.
- - Premise Team deals with abandoned autos, weed lots, graffiti, illegal dumping, etc.
- - Housing Team deals with unsafe structures, board and secure and CDBG inspections.
- - Court Team deals with all written citations and keeps enforcement in the field rather than the court.

MAYOR"S CRIME INITIATIVE PROGRAM:

- - As promised, I am spending a great deal of my time on the issue of increased crime and will continue to do so until we see things get much better.
- - I am currently meeting on a regular basis with the Police Chief, City Manager, City Attorney and Codes Staff.
- - We have developed a Criminal Abatement Program (CAP) which targets specific hot spots of crime and brings all resources together to attack the problem
- - Phase one is intelligence gathering and enforcement gathering with SWAT.
- - Phase two utilizes code enforcement, LRFD, Animal Control and other agencies.
- - Phase three brings in Patrol, COPP, Traffic Services and SWAT..
- - Phase four uses Neighborhood 'Watch, Crime Prevention and Community Programs and Abatement proceedings.
- - I am also having monthly meetings with downtown neighborhood groups to assure follow up and feed back in areas of increased crime. I am proud to say, we are making great progress.
- - I am doing ride- along and other out in the community activities.
- - I have set up the 12th street Corridor Committee to focus on ways to bring the churches and businesses into partnership along this significant corridor.
- - I am working with the Faith based Coalition.

Hopefully, this gives you an idea of the seriousness with which I, your City Board and city management takes this issue. We are a city of economic, social, racial and ethnic diversity. With that comes the unique fabric that makes us a very special place but also brings with it challenges and opportunities. However, I know we cannot call ourselves a GREAT CITY unless we are a SAFE CITY. You have my pledge that we will, with your help and prayers, attain that goal. Finally, here are a few suggestions on how you can help.

- - Call any time you have or see criminal activity.
- - Join a neighborhood association and get active.
- - Start a neighborhood crime watch.
- - Have the Police Dept send out an officer to discuss crime prevention.
- - Get to know your City Board ward representative.
- - Call or email suggestions to my office or the city manager's office.

Thank you and God Bless.

Jim Dailey
Mayor