Mayor's Journal April 5-18, 2004

Once again, the past week or so has been extremely full. From various greetings such as the Arkansas Fair Housing Conference and the Arkansas Highway Department Commercial Vehicle Safety Conference to attendance at the Mann School Dedication and the Compassion Center opening in the old Salvation Army location on Roosevelt Road. In addition, I addressed the HOPE Center graduation (a wonderful program providing life skills training for unemployed mothers); attended the New Futures for Youth Board meeting at the Pulaski Technical facility in North Little Rock (Pulaski Tech just broke ground on a new facility in mid-town); went to a luncheon at Diamond Beer which brews and bottles beer here in Little Rock; hosted a meeting with the Little Rock Convention and Visitor's Bureau for Mayors and others from Central Arkansas to discuss upcoming events surrounding the opening of the Clinton Presidential Center in November and how their respective communities can be involved; met with teachers from SWLR to discuss issues of concern to them; attended a meeting arranged by Officer Bill Cobb of residents in the MLK Drive area to discuss crime issues; had various conferences with members of the FCC committee, which I am chairing and numerous other routine meetings and appearances.

I, along with Little Rock National Airport Management and Commission representatives, met with officials from Southwest Airlines to discuss service in and out of Little Rock. We are fortunate to have this major, solid and well-managed carrier at Little Rock National and we have been assured Little Rock continues to be important to Southwest Airlines. On other business related topics, the city manager and I met with executives of Fidelity National Financial to discuss their continued presence in Little Rock. This company purchased the former Systematics from Alltel and we are optimistic about the opportunities for this established organization and its operation in our capital city.

Other noteworthy events or meetings was the announcement of the AAU National Boys Championship to be held in LR in 2005 and 2006 bringing 1200 -1500 team members, family and friends to our community. I also met with the Dunbar Alumni Association ,which meets in Little Rock every few years bringing over 1000 graduates of Dunbar to our city. Finally, I attended the dedication of the wonderful new Gary Hogan Ball field located in the Oak Forest area on Saturday. This new facility (formerly Curran-Conway) will now be one of the finest ball parks in which the UALR Baseball program competes. In addition, it recognizes the man who has carried the flag for UALR baseball for many years.

There are two other important events I attended…the public forums with the two finalists for Planning Director of Little Rock. This position is clearly one of the most significant jobs in city government in that this department deals with all the land use and zoning decisions that come before the Planning Commission and the City Board. In addition, as our capital city continues to progress and steps up to another level, planning for the future is critical. My congratulations to the two finalists--Little Rock's own, Tony Bozynski and Catherine Powers of Clayton Missouri.

Now, the selection of Planning Director is a perfect introduction to a few brief points I wish to make about city staff. This past week has been "Employee Appreciation Week" and our Human Resources Department has done a phenomenal job of organizing all sorts of activities, from an awards luncheon, where Modena Jardina was awarded the Mahlon Martin Employee of the Year to departmental breakfasts to various competitive fun and games to a huge family employee picnic on Saturday. I was impressed with the excitement and participation of so many staff I rarely see...some with behind the scenes jobs...some with jobs in maintenance or out in the field or in parks or located in other parts of the city. It was great to see all of them come together and I know it will pay dividends in attitudes as well as relationship development. To Human Resources and so many others who made it happen...thank you and job well done! On the job well done note, I also want to say how very proud I am of the employees of city government. I see how hard you work, how much effort you expend to try and serve our citizens. I see the extra hours you put in attending neighborhood meetings, participating in neighborhood clean-ups, neighborhood board and secure days. I see the weekends and nights so many of you put in getting the job done rather than walking away just because the clock shows 5:00.

I know how patient you can be when irate and sometimes unreasonable citizens call City Hall. I know how many of you have 10, 20, 30 years and more of service to our citizens and most of you never even get a simple thank you. As one who grew up in the business world and employed many individuals, I must say none were any better than you. I am proud to be associated with you and I am honored to serve as mayor knowing you are on the job and want to say, from the bottom of my heart, I APPRECIATE YOU and what you do for our city!!!!

To the citizens of Little Rock, I hope you will join me in thanking the hundreds of unsung heroes, people like Firefighter Josh White, who saved a man’s life at a football game in Oklahoma who was having a heart attack or Clayton Patterson, who pulled an elderly lady out of her burning home or one of our Public Works employees, Charles Cain, who stopped to help a stranded motorist on the interstate and was hit and killed by a car passing. These employees come to work every day---pick up your trash, tend to the parks, fix the streets and the list goes on and on and rarely ever get a thank you for doing so! Join me in saying thank you and maybe even smiling at that street worker that is delaying you or leave a thank you note for the person who picks up your garbage....that worker will feel better...you will feel better...and we will have a better city because you have shown you care. God Bless you!