Mayor's Journal June 15-June 26

Tuesday, June 15: Today was a hectic day beginning early with a juvenile diabetes breakfast and ending with a city board meeting. If anyone is interesting in participating or helping raise funds for the JDF, please call Shayla in my office as she is the key City of Little Rock contact for this event. The walk is September 18, so you have plenty of time to get involved.

I had my monthly pension review board meeting mid-morning, which lasted a couple of hours. Afterwards, I attended the 12th Street Corridor meeting at the Neighborhood Resource Center with a group of pastors from the 12th Street area and staff discussing plans to clean up that area. The concept of involving churches to "adopt a block" is based on Father Michael Pfleger's talk a couple of years ago. We are getting a positive reaction and will continue to move forward with this idea. Following this, I had a couple of in-office meetings and lastly….the City Board meeting.

Wednesday-Friday, June 16-18, was packed with Arkansas Municipal League conference activities and a few in-office meetings. One meeting I do want to mention is my meeting with Rev. Larry Benfield and Sharon Priest of the Downtown Partnership. As you are aware, Rev. Benfield chairs the homeless task force that the DP coordinated last year. I try to meet with them monthly to discuss the issue of the homelessness in the downtown areas. From what I am told, there is a criminal element presenting itself more frequently and as mayor, I have asked our city manager to monitor this situation and not let it get out of hand. As a result of my charge to clean up our city, a homeless working group has been formed to develop a "plan of action" within the next few weeks, but folks I assure you…we will get the homeless population under control in a humane manner.

Monday, June 21: This morning was the American Taekwondo Association press conference for their 35th year of championships here in Little Rock at the Statehouse Convention Center. It's truly an honor to have the ATA International Headquarters located right here in Little Rock. The ATA Championship opening ceremony is a wonderful event to attend, if you ever get a chance. They bring in thousands of visitors from all over the world; this event's economic impact on our city is at least $5 million spent during the week…we are truly thankful to have the ATA here.

Later in the afternoon, I met with the I-30 Task Force (a group of downtown neighbors, businesses and staff) to discuss the events that have occurred over the past month. One of the main concerns is East View Terrace. I have already met with the manager of the property along with the property's management agency out of Texas. We discussed the best ways to get this piece of property cleaned up, and management seemed to be very receptive. I have asked to meet with them on a monthly basis. This is what I did with Fowler Square in the beginning, which helped them continue in a positive direction.

Monday evening was "Talk Live", my call-in program, on the City's government access channel, which was quite successful. In addition to City Manager Bruce T. Moore, Fire Chief Rhoda Mae

Kerr joined me. She addressed fireworks regulations and safety since the 4th July is right around the corner. We received some interesting calls about the homeless, Clinton Library, infrastructure and codes issues. Overall, I look forward to our next session, which will be in September.

The rest of the week was filled with in-office meetings, phone calls and press events. I met with Rev. Dick Holloway of the Compassion Center and representatives from the Lafayette Building. On July 27 from 5-7pm they will host a meeting to discuss the homeless issue. Rev. Holloway has a really neat idea, which I hope citizens will emulate. He has made a coupon booklet with passes for one free night lodging, along with, dinner and breakfast at the Compassion Center to pass out to the homeless instead of money. I think this is a great idea and believe those truly in need will take advantage of this generous offer. Please take time to attend the meeting if you are able.

On Thursday evening, I attended a river cruise for the Central Arkansas Rivertrail. This featured representatives from the U.S. Department of the Interior and National Park Service as special guests. They were very complimentary at the way Little Rock's medical community, especially the Heart Clinic of Arkansas, has stepped forward to raise money for recreation programs. This is a national need, and Little Rock is on the forefront in this endeavor. I want to thank Little Rock Parks Director Bryan Day, Terry Eastin, and the many others involved in this effort for their untiring dedication to ensuring the trail will be a reality and not just a dream for Central Arkansas.

Friday, June 25: I began with a breakfast with Dr. Michael Suk of the Department of Interior. He is interested in the Rivertrails project and came to the event on Thursday evening. We discussed it at more length Friday morning.

I then met with the Executive Director of the Housing Authority, Lee Jones, the City Manager and HUD staff. I have asked to meet with them on a monthly basis as the LRHA seeks to regain confidence within the community.

I attended the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce's Leadership graduation at the Doubletree. Two City employees, Shayla Beebe and Shannon Light, graduated from this remarkable program, which is now in its nineteenth year. Congratulations to both of these young ladies!

I also attended the dedication of the ATA Eternal Grandmaster's garden at the Statehouse Convention Center. This is a nice area and if you get a chance, please go by and see it. Afterwards, there was a luncheon with the ATA and several international guests. I was honored to attend.

With such a busy schedule here lately, I am looking forward to my vacation. Patti and I will head out on Saturday, June 26 for Colorado and I will return back into office in August. Until then, have a wonderful and safe July and God bless!