Mayor's Journal : January 27-February 4

It is difficult for me to believe the first month of this year is already gone. It never ceases to amaze me how fast time flies and also how much goes on in a week around this office.

Tuesday, January 27: This morning Shayla Beebe from my office and I visited Rob Spivey at the Old VA hospital on Roosevelt Road. Rob is the Director of the Little Rock Training Center for the Institute for Basic Life Principles (IBLP) out of Illinois. For the past couple of years the Institute has had a group of wonderful, skilled young people working to completely renovate the interior of this monstrous building. They are doing a magnificent job converting this structure into a training center for IBLP. We are truly blessed to have IBLP in Little Rock and I find myself in awe over the giving spirit of this group. Some of you may remember the 50 or so young men (the Alert Team) who came to Little Rock after each of the two tornadoes hit our city. A simple call from my office to Mr. Bill Gothard, founder of the Institute, brought the team to help clean up and patch up our devastated neighborhoods. Equally amazing, this was done at no cost to our city. In addition, even as they were working on the VA for their use, they finished and provided space to the LRPD Downtown Patrol division...again at no cost. I can go on and on to list other things done such as helping with distressed home owners or with our Board and Secure Program. Let me say it one more time..."we are blessed and fortunate to have IBLP here".

Tuesday was also a City Board Agenda Day so I spent some time preparing for the meeting. It was at this meeting our board met in Executive Session for the annual evaluation of the City Manager. In our form of government, I and the city board, have only two employees...the city manager and the city attorney. We gave Mr. Moore high marks and set his salary for 2004. The City attorney's evaluation will be conducted next week.

Wednesday, January 28: I attended the Metroplan Board meeting. This organization is a council of governments for the region and deals with highway and street funding as well as broad long range planning. Possibly most significant at this meeting was discussion and adoption of the 2004 Metroplan Workplan. Staff continues to work on a method to move the North Belt Freeway forward; to assist the Mid Arkansas Water Alliance in its organizational effort; to pursue a 2050 Regional Growth Framework Plan; to coordinate the Ozone Action Days Program and Clean Cities Program; and provide technical assistance to member governments in central Arkansas.

Later, I met with the owner of the Holiday Inn Presidential Center to discuss a business concern and a business opportunity and Wednesday evening Chamber representatives and others met with a large industrial prospect in hopes of having a major announcement very soon.

My staff met about the Volunteer Luncheon I mentioned in the State of the City Address…we are shooting for early fall this year to recognize the hundreds of commission volunteers for the City.

Thursday, January 29: I was updated on the Korean War Memorial to be located at MacArthur Park and participated in the Public Facilities Board meeting discussions about design concepts for the Junction Bridge (the one behind the River Market). The design looks exciting and when finished will allow events and public access across the river between LR and NLR riverfronts. With this bridge, the bridge over Murray Lock and Dam and the bridge at the Presidential Library, we can expect tourists and our citizens to enjoy a unique experience as two cities continue work together. Finally, I visited the Central High Visitor Center to meet Mr. Richard Wormser. I purchased his most recent book: The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow.

Friday, January 30: I attended the announcement of the acquisition of a building to be owned and used for retail space by the Clinton Library Foundation. This is another strong statement from former President Clinton regarding the role his Presidential Center will play in the progress of downtown.

Mayor Hays, Judge Villines, I and our city manager, met to discuss the Junction Bridge and other topics of mutual interest. I know most of you are aware of the positive working relationship during the past ten years between the different municipalities within Pulaski County… much can happen when we work together.

I also held a meeting with Shayla and our Governmental Relations Liaison, Odies Wilson, to discuss progress of the Empowerment Zone. This is a Federal designation, which allows various tax benefits to business owners and residents who work or do work in the Empowerment districts (basically downtown LR and NLR; the LR Port and Asher Avenue around UALR.)

Finally, I met with property owners to discuss crime issues, attended a media conference announcing a partnership between UAMS Department of Psychiatry and the Little Rock Museum of Discovery to educate children about depression; met with a business prospect and lastly, met with our convention bureau staff and Shayla to discuss a proposed regional meeting to bring mayors and other leaders together to exchange information about events during 2004.

If you made it this far, congratulations and thanks so much for your interest. Do something nice for someone today.