

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
IN REGULAR SESSION
January 13, 2009**

A regular session of the Winchester Common Council was held on Tuesday, January 13, 2009 in the Council Chambers, Rouss City Hall. President Jeffrey Buettner called the meeting to order at 6:58 p.m.

PRESENT: Councilor Michael Butler, Evan Clark, John Hill, Milt McInturff, Les Veach and John Willingham; Vice-President Art Major; Mayor Elizabeth Minor; President Jeff Buettner. (9)

ABSENT: None. (0)

INVOCATION – Reverend Jim Utt, Grace Lutheran Church, pronounced the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Mayor Minor led the council members and citizens in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Mayor Minor moved to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2008 Regular Meeting and December 23, 2008 Special Meeting. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Butler then unanimously approved by voice-vote.*

CALL FOR NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF VICE MAYOR – Councilor Willingham moved to nominate Councilor Butler for vice-mayor. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Hill then unanimously approved by voice-vote.*

REPORT OF PRESIDENT

- Steering Committee for Unification Statement

Michael Foreman thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak and promised to be brief. He stated the Steering Committee presented their final report in April. The committee unanimously called for unification of the two communities and asked the City and County to begin a detailed study on the best form of government to choose. This is a political decision that requires more economic and demographic data to allow the right choice from those available under Virginia law. At the meeting, each member of the governing bodies were asked to write down what they thought would happen next. The majority believed the city and county should begin a series of joint meetings to discuss either partial or co-unification. From that time until tonight no other words or action have appeared to have been made by either governing

body. He is here tonight to ask on behalf of the committees, employees and citizens that you make some efforts to meet with the county board and to either begin the talks and study that will result in a proposal towards unification or publicly advise us and the public that there will be no further efforts towards unification and the report and recommendation will simply be made a part of the history of the city and county. In light of the many changes in the local, state and national economy, the Steering Committee is of the opinion there could be no more precipitous time for the city and county to begin consolidation efforts so the government will be able to provide the necessary services in the most efficient, cost effective way during a time when the demand for services only increase when the population increases and the financial resources seem to decline. He asked Council to put the request on the agenda and that some action is made in due course.

Vice-President Major moved to amend Section 7-17 of the Winchester City Code as presented to reflect the text in red on the amended ordinance. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Willingham then unanimously approved by voice-vote.*

- Public Hearing: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND RE-ADOPT SECTIONS 7-2 THROUGH 7-4 AND SECTION 7-17 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE TO ALLOW FOR THE ADDITION OF AN ADDITIONAL VOTING PRECINCT.

No citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:06 p.m.

- Public Hearing: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE 14 OF THE WINCHESTER ZONING ORDINANCE PERTAINING TO EXCLUSIONS IN THE HISTORIC WINCHESTER (HW) DISTRICT TA-08-08

Frank Wright of the Preservation of Historic Winchester stated the ordinance is a solution in search of a problem. No one has complained about having to go to the BAR and the DHR for tax credits. The proposed ordinance would exclude from the BARs review those tax credit projects that have been approved by the DHR. The DHR in Richmond goes by the Secretary of Interior standards for projects which is the same standards used by the BAR. He believes the argument being made is why require the applicant to go through two processes when the result should be the same. It is true both apply the same standards but their scope of review is different. In short, the city's own ordinance specifies that the BAR shall take into account other factors the DHR does not. DHR welcomes the local input because they don't know what the local boards know. They have never had a local board give up their authority. This proposal gives back to the state the power this council has to approve local properties. The DHR tax credit process is a laborious one but it only takes 1-2 hours for an applicant to come before the BAR. The

burden on the applicant is slight but the benefit to the city is great. There is simply no good reason to fix what is not broken. Mr. Wright's address is 126 W. Cork Street.

No further citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:12 p.m.

- Public Hearing: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 18-6-6.1 OF THE WINCHESTER ZONING ORDINANCE PERTAINING TO SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS FROM OFF-STREET PARKING AND LOADING REQUIREMENTS TA-08-09

No citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:13 p.m.

- Public Hearing: Request of Mandy Van Fossen for a conditional use permit for a gymnastic studio at 1810 Roberts St (Section 251, Double Circle 1, Lot 25) zoned Limited Industrial, M-1 District. CU-08-15

Richard Pifer of 601 Merrymans Lane stated he owns the property where the studio will be and requested the hour restrictions be lifted once the site plan is revised for his property. He stated he is glad to see new faces and fewer faces on council. He looks forward to council moving forward and making downtown a vibrant area that it is. He hopes council gives it attention and brings it up to par like other urban areas.

No further citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:15 p.m.

- Public Hearing: Request of South Braddock Street Renovations, LLC for a conditional use permit for extended stay lodging at 116-118 S. Braddock St (Section 193, Double Circle 1, Block E, Lot 3) zoned Central Business, B-1 District with Historic Winchester, HW overlay. CU-08-16

Lawton Saunders of 407 W. Loudoun Street stated he is managing partner of South Braddock Street Renovations. The project is renovating the old cleaners into office space which has been leased and building a building in the rear for 6 extended stay housing units. We did one of these projects on Cameron Street that has been very successful. It gets people downtown that would normally stay in the outlying areas to use our restaurants and to shop downtown. By right, they could do 5 apartments but the difference is the extended stay for one person apartments. We think it is good for the downtown area and ask that you approve it.

No further citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:35 p.m.

- Public Hearing: Request of Montgomery Engineering Group, Inc for a conditional use permit for an automobile service establishment at 24-36 W. Hart St (Section 212, Double Circle 1, Block M, Lot 2) zoned Central Business, B-1 District. CU-08-17

Ben Montgomery of Montgomery Engineering, 132 Saddleback Lane, spoke on behalf of Hables Real Estate, the property owner, and stated they do not have any problem with the language penned at the last work session. He requested the approval be based on that language.

No further citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:18 p.m.

- Public Hearing: Request of DFC Architects, PC for a conditional use permit for a two-family dwelling at 319-321 S. Kent St (Section 193, Double Circle 1, Block R, Lot 19) zoned Limited High Density Residential, HR-1 District with Historic Winchester, HW District overlay. CU-08-18

No citizens came forward to address Council concerning this issue and the President declared the public hearing closed at 7:18 p.m.

- Motion to appoint Mayor Elizabeth Minor to the John Handley High School Rededication Committee.

The motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Butler then unanimously approved by voice-vote.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Chairman Major presented the following:

- Second Reading, by title, for adoption: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND AND RE-ADOPT SECTIONS 7-2 THROUGH 7-4 AND SECTION 7-17 OF THE WINCHESTER CITY CODE TO ALLOW FOR THE ADDITION OF AN ADDITIONAL VOTING PRECINCT.

The motion was adopted by the affirmative roll-call vote of a majority of all members of the Common Council, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:

<u>MEMBER</u>	<u>VOTE</u>
Vice-Mayor Butler	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye

Councilor Hill	Aye
Vice-President Major	Aye
Councilor McInturff	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Veach	Aye
Councilor Willingham	Aye
President Buettner	Aye

- Motion to adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager or his designee to execute and file applications; and annual certification and assurances to the Federal Transportation Administration.

The motion was seconded by Mayor Minor then unanimously approved by voice-vote.

- Motion to adopt a transit Resolution authorizing an application to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation for state aid to public transportation for fiscal Year 2010.

The motion was seconded by Mayor Minor then unanimously approved by voice-vote.

- Motion to approve an amendment to Procurement Guidelines to Solicit Local Vendors for Small Purchases.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Butler then unanimously approved by voice-vote.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Chairman Butler presented the following:

- Second Reading, by title, for adoption: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE 14 OF THE WINCHESTER ZONING ORDINANCE PERTAINING TO EXCLUSIONS IN THE HISTORIC WINCHESTER (HW) DISTRICT TA-08-08

Councilor Willingham stated he believes council needs to remove all obstacles and barriers to redevelop historical properties. The historical tax credit process is very lengthy as Mr. Wright mentioned but it is very thorough with multiple levels of review. Anything we can do to facilitate having redevelopment and to expedite the process is good for redevelopment and for the investment of downtown and outlying areas.

The motion was adopted by the affirmative roll-call vote of a majority of all members of the Common Council, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:

<u>MEMBER</u>	<u>VOTE</u>
Vice-Mayor Butler	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Hill	Aye
Vice-President Major	Aye
Councilor McInturff	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Veach	Aye
Councilor Willingham	Aye
President Buettner	Aye

- Second Reading, by title, for adoption: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 18-6-6.1 OF THE WINCHESTER ZONING ORDINANCE PERTAINING TO SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS FROM OFF-STREET PARKING AND LOADING REQUIREMENTS TA-08-09

The motion was adopted by the affirmative roll-call vote of a majority of all members of the Common Council, the ayes and nays being recorded as shown below:

<u>MEMBER</u>	<u>VOTE</u>
Vice-Mayor Butler	Aye
Councilor Clark	Aye
Councilor Hill	Aye
Vice-President Major	Aye
Councilor McInturff	Aye
Mayor Minor	Aye
Councilor Veach	Aye
Councilor Willingham	Aye
President Buettner	Aye

- Motion to approve the request of Mandy Van Fossen for a conditional use permit for a gymnastic studio at 1810 Roberts St (Section 251, Double Circle 1, Lot 25) zoned Limited Industrial, M-1 District. CU-08-15

The motion was seconded by Mayor Minor.

Vice-President Major stated he supports the motion but he wants to discuss the parking requirements. One of the conditions is limiting the hours based on parking availability. Council just approved another establishment's parking exemption and he is confused as why they are different. The regulation does not make sense to limit the hours of operation. He is encouraging council to

task staff with looking at the regulation and modifying it as needed. In the past year, five entities have come before the BZA asking for exemptions. It can't be done tonight but he strongly encourages council to look at it.

Councilor Willingham asked if the available parking changes will the CUP need to be amended or will it change automatically. Planning Director Tim Youmans stated it will automatically be taken care of.

The motion was unanimously approved by voice-vote.

- Motion to approve the request of South Braddock Street Renovations, LLC for a conditional use permit for extended stay lodging at 116-118 S. Braddock St (Section 193, Double Circle 1, Block E, Lot 3) zoned Central Business, B-1 District with Historic Winchester, HW overlay. CU-08-16

The motion was seconded by Vice-President Major then unanimously approved by voice-vote.

- Motion to approve the request of Montgomery Engineering Group, Inc for a conditional use permit for an automobile service establishment at 24-36 W. Hart St (Section 212, Double Circle 1, Block M, Lot 2) zoned Central Business, B-1 District. CU-08-17

The motion was seconded by Mayor Minor then unanimously approved by voice-vote.

- Motion to approve the request of DFC Architects, PC for a conditional use permit for a two-family dwelling at 319-321 S. Kent St (Section 193, Double Circle 1, Block R, Lot 19) zoned Limited High Density Residential, HR-1 District with Historic Winchester, HW District overlay. CU-08-18

The motion was seconded by Councilor Willingham then unanimously approved by voice-vote.

- Motion to approve a resolution relating to the Support of the Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission.

Tourism Director Natalie Wills stated the department has a committee in place and is already working on the precursor to the sesquicentennial which is the John Brown Raid in Harpers Ferry. They will be honoring Hayward Shepherd, the first victim of the raid, with a memorial service in June. Also, George Washington Kurtz, a businessman in Winchester, was one of the first responders to the raid and his militia uniform will be on display at the Hollingsworth Mill. On johnbrownraid.org, we are known as Winchester, Virginia – From the First Shot to the Gallows. It is important to know this is a commemoration and not a celebration. We have over 6000 union and

confederate soldiers buried within the city limits and have visitors researching their ancestors here every year looking for the civil war experience. She asked for council's support of the resolution which grants the permission to use the logo and to become more fully involved.

The motion was seconded by Mayor Minor then unanimously approved by voice-vote.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Chairman Veach stated the Public Services Committee is working hard but did not have a report.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND SERVICES

Chairman Minor stated the Community Safety and Services Committee did not have a report.

HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE

Chairman Willingham reported on the following:

- Announce the term expiration of Fran Orr and Ann Wigley as members of the Social Services Advisory Board and direct the Clerk of Council to advertise the vacancy.
- Announce the term expiration of Donald K. Price as a member of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Disability Services Board and direct the Clerk of Council to advertise the vacancy.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Minor gave the 2008 annual report, a copy of which is attached.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Mayor Butler moved to adjourn the meeting. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Willingham then unanimously approved by voice-vote at 7:54 p.m.*

Kari J. Van Diest
Deputy Clerk of the Common Council

MAYOR'S REPORT

January 2009

It's hard to believe that 2008 has come to a close! It has been an exceptionally challenging yet rewarding year for the City. It is my pleasure to present this review and reflect on our activities over the past year. Change has been a predominant theme.

Our first change occurred in January as interim City Manager Charley Gaynor turned over the helm to Brannon Godfrey. Brannon was selected following a nationwide search of more than 50 candidates. With a new home, new school, and new friends, it has been a year of change for Brannon, his wife Leslie and sons Collier and Harrison.

The City also saw transition in the leadership at the Police Department. Kevin Sanzenbacher became Police Chief in November and we welcomed him and his wife Estelle to our community. Special thanks to Major David White and Assistant City Manager Craig Smith for serving in the Chief's capacity during this recruitment. Our Police Department is fully staffed and are always out there to serve and protect.

Our Volunteers in Policing – or VIP's as we call them – are a large part of the Police Department. They have served 2,800 volunteer hours saving us over \$54,000 in employee salaries! VIP's participated in at least 43 community events, patrolled in business and shopping areas over the holidays and issued 31 handicap parking tickets. Upon resident requests, they even conducted house checks while residents were out of the City during the holidays. Thank you to all our Volunteers in Policing!

The City continues to change the way we do business. City Treasurer Mark Garber began offering online bill payment in November 2007 and the first full year has been quite successful. Soon you will also be able to use your credit card "in person".

While the electronic transaction seems simple enough, it plays an even bigger role with City staff working to reduce our carbon footprint. We started by changing little things like installing light sensors in bathrooms and less traveled corridors. We switched light bulbs in some rooms to low wattage compact fluorescents. Learn how you can make changes at home with energy efficiency, gardening, safe cleaning supplies and so much more by signing up for our FREE "Green" Workshops. You will learn how to conserve thereby saving money! We applaud your efforts to recycle, helping to reduce the amount of solid waste taken to the landfill and saving over \$55,000 in landfill disposal fees! If the past 3 years show a pattern, our Annual Recycling Rate should be near 40% which is well above the state minimum requirement of 25%. Your work has had a positive impact by saving 9200 cubic yards of landfill space, 26,000 trees, 81,500 gallons of gasoline, and 17 kilo watt hours of electricity. You have also helped to reduce greenhouse gases, air emissions, and waterborne waste.

One thing that has not changed, thankfully, is the City's financial health as it remains good. Despite shrinking general fund revenues, the City's foresight during years of growth has put us in a favorable position with fund balance reserves for a rainy day. The City's financial model determines the impact of schools and other projects on the City's finances and continues to make accurate forecasts. The City has maintained its AA bond status by both Moody's and Standard and Poor's rating agencies. Staff has already begun work on the annual budget. We realize this will be a tight fiscal year.

The Emergency Communications Center answered slightly more than 200,000 phone calls last year. Can you imagine answering the phone 24 times in one hour to an assortment of traumatic events and emergencies? This takes special dedication from our career staff and for this we are very grateful. Someone is always there to answer our emergency.

The Fire and Rescue Department responded to 5300 incidents this year. There were 65 structure fires including one that occurred almost a year ago involving a 4-year old boy. Thanks to our fire and rescue personnel, he is alive today. I am also pleased to report that that while in the field, our personnel were able to successfully perform cardiac resuscitation 20% of the time while the national success rate is 6%. We were called to respond to our neighbors in Frederick County through mutual aid on 477 calls. And finally, we're pleased that South End Volunteer Fire & Rescue Station placed a new fire engine in service this year. Other equipment was secured *without* general fund expenditures including six new 12-Lead heart monitor/defibrillators. We provided educational information to over 4800 kids and adults, conducted fire safety inspections, installed child safety seats, carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors.

The Fee for Emergency Medical Transport Program completed its second year and transported 4100 patients. We were able to continue to provide funds to assist volunteer stations. Collections totaled \$823,000.

The Office of Housing and Neighborhood Development gained support from the Community Development Committee and will ask for City Council endorsement later this month to move forward on an application to the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, the goal of which is to stabilize neighborhoods and stem the decline of house values of neighboring homes. Through partnerships, foreclosed properties that might otherwise become sources of abandonment and blight could be redeveloped.

A Community Development Block Grant funded Frederick Douglass Park renovations. Together with the North End Citizens Association, volunteers helped plant flowers, install picnic tables, and install signage. Final touches to the park included new basketball and soccer goals. In addition, the grant also funded much needed sidewalk improvements on Liberty Avenue. These changes have truly beautified these neighborhoods.

In addition, a Homeless Prevention Grant allowed the Winchester Social Services to provide \$29,500 in shelter and utility assistance to prevent eviction or secure housing

for 21 families. The City also adopted new preferences under the Housing Choice Voucher Program to help combat homelessness.

The Department of Social Services has long outgrown the aging office building it occupies on Boscawen Street. Social Services will co-locate with other service providers at the Our Health Campus in the fall of this year. When completed, the project will rehabilitate over 30,000 square feet of vacant property, and contribute significantly to the revitalization of North Cameron Street.

Social Services coordinated the Annual Heater Drive again this year. Thanks to the generosity of local faith based groups and certain private citizens, Social Services distributed new electric heaters to over 75 city households and provided cash assistance to an additional 6 families who needed to re-connect utilities or meet the minimum delivery amounts for home heating oil.

Another change we are excited about is the update to the City's Comprehensive Plan. In addition to the Planning Commission holding special worksessions, a staff-level team compiled and analyzed data and worked with the City's consultant. We thank all of you who participated in Comprehensive Plan Public Input Sessions and those who responded to the Citizen Satisfaction Survey. Special thanks to Don Crawford, Bruce Santilli, and Carmen Crawford for representing their wards on the Citizen Advisory Panel. The Comprehensive Plan will have final review from the Planning Commission and City Council later this year. This document is an important blueprint for the City's future.

The Planning Commission and Planning Department were busy reviewing development proposals this past year. We issued over 350 certificates of Occupancy for Business or Home Occupation. Conditional Use Permits have almost tripled in the last three years to 19 applications in 2008. Winchester continues to be a great place to locate your business.

Within the past year, additional efforts have been made in resolving the overcrowding concerns in the City's residential neighborhoods. The number of complaints received has decreased and the percentage of violations abated among closed cases has increased.

The Administration Department works hard to maintain competitive recruiting efforts and retain the dedicated and knowledgeable staff we have working for the city. We are so proud of our employees and all they do. They are our unsung heroes and it has truly been another year of giving on their part through various drives including:

- Donating blood for the American Red Cross;
- Contributions to the United Way Campaign;
- 120 blankets, pillows, sleeping bags, and baby blankets in the "City Employees to the Rescue: Fill An Ambulance" for the annual Community Blanket Drive (that's 102 more blankets than last year's contribution!);

- A desire to lead a healthier lifestyle through a loss of 620 pounds (wow!) through the Weight Watchers Program and participation in the Wellness Challenge;

And the list goes on to include beneficiaries such as the Chain of Checks, the Salvation Army and the United Way Day of Caring. Thank you City Employees!

And finally, 36 families were the recipients of this year's Timbrook Food and Toy Drive. The boxes of food and toys were delivered to the homes in plenty of time for Christmas.

A lot of changes happened with our Parks and Recreation Department leading the charge. We changed the façade at the War Memorial Building! The Active Living and Recreation Center was officially dedicated in December. This beautiful facility is now home to Winchester's seniors involved with the Shenandoah Area Agency on Aging. We look forward to this partnership which will bring together the Greatest Generation with the children in the Park and Recreation's After School Program. What a special union this is!

The War Memorial Building has been completely renovated. The work included the replacement of fitness equipment, new fixtures, televisions, new doors and windows, and a new drop ceiling. In addition, the park was able to upgrade many of its gravel parking lots to asphalt-surfaced lots. With a capacity of 1100 people, please consider holding your next event at the Active Living and Recreation Center and discover all we have to offer!

We not only changed the inside of park buildings but outside as well. The Winchester Dog Park opened this past fall on a one-acre fenced site located near the horseshoe courts in Jim Barnett Park. The dog park was funded by private contributions through the Winchester Parks Foundation, a PETCO grant, and a portion of the park fund balance. You can contact Parks and Recreation for a yearly membership!

I am pleased to report that two City Parks and Recreation Department programs were recognized at the annual Virginia Recreation and Parks Society Conference. The department's "Junior Gazette" youth journalism effort won Best New Program honors and the "Eggcessible Easter Egg Hunt" for children with special needs took the Best New Special Event award. The Bubble Van rounded out new programming as a traveling arts and crafts/game vehicle that visited community parks and events sponsored by the City.

This year, The First Presbyterian Church completed their \$7 million expansion and The George Washington Hotel opened following a \$24 million renovation. Both are wonderful assets to downtown! Several other properties received a face lift with help from the Old Town Façade Improvement Program and overall downtown had a net gain of four businesses in 2008. Come downtown and experience charming shops, restaurants, and galleries, centuries-old architecture, and numerous historical landmarks. Discover convenience, security, and the warm embrace of community.

Infrastructure improvements will continue to be a priority of the City as we replace pipeline for our water and wastewater systems with the Northeast Infrastructure Project. The Cork Street section is complete and work continues on East Lane. Woodstock Lane will follow and then Berryville Avenue to I-81 will finish this project. This work will produce increased water pressure, improved reliability in the water and sewer lines, and new roads and sidewalks. Bear with us over the coming months as we improve this important roadway into the City.

2008 was a year of change for Tourism as well. While welcoming over 16,000 visitors during the year, much of the staff and tourism board's efforts were concentrated on moving in to the new Visitor and Civil War Orientation Center. The 5000 square foot facility contains beautiful graphic design and multi media units showcasing Winchester-Frederick County. The City is proud to continue this tourism partnership with Frederick County along with our newest partners the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation and Shenandoah University.

City Council and staff strive to keep you abreast of what is happening in Winchester. This year we added CitE-News as one of our media outlets. CitE-News is the City's FREE bi-weekly email newsletter. It provides up-to-date information to help keep you informed of City projects, events, and meetings. Be in the know, get involved and get your information straight from us. Join close to 400 other subscribers and sign up online at winchesterva.gov. In addition, we graduated our biggest INSIGHT class to date in 4 years of doing the program with 29 graduates. This citizen academy program is being honored by ICMA as a case study in its upcoming "*Leading Ideas Series Event*".

The faces of Council changed at the end of 2008 as well. We said goodbye to Council President Charley Gaynor, Vice President Carolyn Griffin, and Councilors Tim Coyne, Stewart Masters, Dick Helm and Rick Nelson. With over 55 years experience combined, this fine group will be sorely missed. Thank you for your service to the citizens of Winchester.

Tonight we welcome John Hill, Milt McInturff, Les Veach, and John Willingham to their first council meeting. I look forward to working with each of you over the coming years.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you who serves on a board or commission or committee for the City. You are truly dedicated to making the City a better place to live, work, and play. We cannot say it often enough, "Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!"

In 2009, construction crews will continue to be a familiar sight. The construction of the City's fourth parking garage will be completed this year and we will experience improved traffic flow with the completion of the North East Infrastructure Project. Handley High School renovations continue as work begins on the outside as funded through private donations and work on the Green Circle Phase One near Shenandoah University and Mount Carmel Baptist Church will commence in the spring.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone a safe, healthy, and happy new year. Please continue to pray for the safety of our troops all around the world who are defending our freedom. City Council and staff will be busy in 2009 and more change will occur. We will continue to focus on core services and delivering those services in an efficient manner with a focus on the customer. We look forward to a productive year and encourage your continued participation in your City government.