

Springfield's 2010 State of the City
January 6, 2010
Richard E. Wildish Theater – Downtown Springfield

Good morning Springfield!

Thank you, and welcome to the Wildish Theater. I am so pleased to see all of you here today and I appreciate your time and dedication to our community. As you saw, it was another busy year in Springfield. And as our country deals with difficult economic times, I am continually amazed at how the residents of this great city just keep moving forward, we continue to meet the challenges placed in our path and we continue to work hard. In a sense, we “Got Back” to focusing on the people and small businesses that make our city run.

I want to thank Chamber Music Amici for their wonderful performance and for enriching our community with their music. They will return to this theater on February 22 and I encourage you to join them.

Ladies, gentlemen, neighbors and colleagues, in my tenth year as mayor it continues to be a great honor to serve you. There are many challenges placed in front of those that choose to be a public servant, and through those challenges and successes, the importance of working hard for the community remains my most important goal.

Your elected officials continue working towards making Springfield a preferred place to live and work. I am blessed to be part of a TEAM of dedicated and humble people that make up your City Council. I am proud to serve with Councilors Christine Lundberg, Dave Ralston, Joe Pishioneri, Hillary Wylie, Terri Leezer and Fred Simmons. Thank you for your dedication.

One important name is absent from that list. On April 28 of last year we dealt with the loss of our Ward 5 Councilor John Woodrow. John was elected to the Springfield City Council in 2002 and was a dedicated public servant and volunteer for more than a decade in our community. He was a tireless advocate for public safety, the protection of animals and worked hard to build a better future for all in Springfield.

John and his wife Marilee chose to move to Springfield in 1997 and immediately became active in the community. Among his many volunteer roles and recognitions, John served as City Council President in 2006 and was presented with the Springfield Chamber of Commerce First Citizen award that same year. Most notably, John was a good friend and we miss him.

(Acknowledge Marilee)

I want to say thank you to the City's executive team, who have also dedicated their careers to serving the public – starting with City Manager Gino Grimaldi, Jeff Towery, Dennis Murphy, Jerry Smith, Bill Grile, Bob Duey, Rob Everett, Susie Smith, Rod Lathrop, Niel Laudati and Greta Utecht. Thank you for your innovation and perseverance towards creating Springfield's bright future. Please stand and be recognized.

In the City Manager's office, Julie, Amy, John, Courtney and Jim – thank you for making my job easier. Please stand - and all city staff in attendance please stand to be recognized.

Thank you to our local delegation for your work on behalf of our community. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkely and Congressman Peter DeFazio – thank you for your service representing Oregon.

In the Oregon legislature, Senator Bill Morrisette and Representative Terry Beyer work to represent the best interests of our community. Thank you.

Commissioner Bill Dwyer has decided not to seek reelection to the Board of Commissioners. Bill, thank you for your longtime service to Springfield.

Finally, to my family Debbie, Zach & Gabe. Thank you. 2009 was a challenging year in many respects. And yet I could always count on my family to be right by my side.

Springfield has had a long history of quality public servants, and though we don't often celebrate city officials, the Lyle Hatfield Good Governance Award is my opportunity to recognize and acknowledgement a demonstrated spirit of community and citizenship.

125 Years:

In a little over a month, Springfield will celebrate our 125th anniversary. I wonder if our City's founder Elias Briggs could have envisioned our bustling city, when he hand dug the Mill Race all those years ago. Could he have predicted our triumphs and tragedies? Would he be surprised by the wonderful diversity of our citizens and our industry? The world has changed more than Elias could have ever imagined. However, I think there are traits in today's Springfield that Elias would definitely recognize. Fortitude, faith and common sense, just to name just a few. In

Springfield, we recognize that success is a process and when we falter we pick ourselves up by our boot straps and get the job done. I'm certain he would be proud.

Our 125th Anniversary will be a year to reflect and celebrate the People, Pride and Progress of our City . As we began to prepare for this significant anniversary, we asked you, our citizens, "what does Springfield mean to you?"

Our citizens said they are proud of our history. And, while we have diversified our economy, it is important that we embrace our past. So to the mill worker, who put in long hours, in a difficult work environment, in order to put food on the table and provide for their family, I say, thank you. We are proud of your many contributions to our community. We are forever linked to our wood products heritage.

And while looking back is important, moving forward is imperative.

Our citizens also said, we have a bright future. So, to those reaching towards that goal I say, work hard and take pride in your city. We are meeting our continued goal of making Springfield a preferred place to live and work. We have let go of the stereotypes of the past and developed a new era of diverse jobs and people.

And we have a lot to be proud of. Much of our inspiration these days comes from our youth.

There continues to be incredible stories of achievement in our School District. Last year we talked about Thurston High School's football team taking 2nd in state. By the way they won the Mid-Western League and made to the quarter finals this season. How about Thurston's baseball

team winning the state championship? This year the Springfield High School Varsity Cheerleading Squad represented our city and the State of Oregon in the United Spirit Association National Championship and won. Coach Janet Fryback. I know you are here today, please stand.

And as we celebrate our upcoming anniversary, let's not forget to have some fun! We have events planned throughout the year, but make sure you mark your calendar for July 16-18 when we will partner with Willamalane Park and Recreation District to throw the biggest free community celebration this city has ever seen. It will be an opportunity for all of Springfield and the entire metro area to celebrate this historic year, together.

As we move forward towards that bright future, we must face the reality that 2009 was a demanding year for all cities in Oregon and Springfield was no exception. And while we have faith in the future, 2010 may well be the city's most fiscally challenged year to date. We recognize that our neighbors down the street, families throughout our state and nation are struggling. While there continues to be uncertainty we also have conviction that we can weather any storm if we stand together. My optimism is based on a firm belief that the community, through the hard work of every citizen, is prepared to meet the challenges of 2010. We remain poised to create jobs in a variety of new sectors as the economy improves. Springfield has built a foundation of trust by acting on the needs of our citizens.

For example, last year home purchases throughout the nation were down due to the challenged economy. Yet even as the economy struggled, we helped 40 families achieve the American

Dream of buying their first home. Guidance and support were given by our staff, along with more than \$450,000 in funding from our SHOP program.

Construction of new homes slowed dramatically in 2009. As a way to help put people back to work building homes, our City Council and staff worked closely with the Homebuilders Association and others to adopt a “build now pay later program.” After Oregon Business Magazine covered this creative approach to help stimulate our local economy, many other cities in Oregon followed suit, rolling out similar programs.

The economic downturn caused losses and hard times across all demographics. To help people get back on their feet, we adopted a Homeless Overnight Shelter Program to provide additional resources and assistance to Springfield residents in need. (Thank Catholic Community Services and all churches in our community who stepped up to help)

Springfield also helped get people back to work by securing project funding through the **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.**

Our Public Works Department sought Stimulus funding that included:

- \$1,400,000 for the Pioneer Parkway Overlay project
- Funding to assist Willamalane and Lane County with the overlay of the EWEB Bikepath from Pioneer Parkway to 31st Street.
- \$250,000 for traffic signal modification and street light replacement.

- Over \$539,000 in community block grant funds from the Department of Energy. Through a partnership with Team Springfield, the city has eight energy efficient lighting projects throughout Springfield that will reduce energy consumption.
- And we have collaborated with ODOT to submit an application for a 50 million-dollar Federal grant, to fund the design and construction of Franklin Blvd improvements.

Our partners at LTD have continued their investment in Springfield. Over the past year, LTD and City staff have worked together on the construction of the Gateway EmX Extension, and it is progressing on schedule. To date, the 41 million dollar project has created 400 local jobs.

We continued to move forward with work on our two Urban Renewal Districts, making significant progress in the update of the Glenwood Refinement Plan. The Glenwood Citizen Advisory Committee remains engaged and energized with visions for the Glenwood of tomorrow. We continue to look forward to the creation of a Riverfront District that people will enjoy for fine dining, entertainment and lodging.

There was increased activity in Downtown this year. The Farmers Market grew, the Springfield Museum and Emerald Art Center continue to bring in top notch exhibits while the Wildish Theater has become a venue of choice for many events. Additionally, more Springfield families made use of the Springfield Library; which has witnessed unprecedented growth in both the number of items checked out and people attending programs. We know we must respond to this

growing demand for service. And we will soon have the results of a community survey that will help us steer the direction of our library into the future.

I am also pleased with the work that has taken place on our Downtown District Plan. While I respect the countless hours of planning and process that have gone into the redevelopment of downtown, the implementation has been slow. Plans are great and we have them, now we need your help in the execution of these plans. Let's use our years of experience and knowledge to outline some achievable and measurable goals over the next three to five years so our community can realize the improvements necessary for our foreseeable future.

Over the past ten years we have talked about the importance of partnerships. As we face an uncertain future, it is even more important to face these challenges united. Our Team Springfield partners – Springfield School District, Willamalane and the Springfield Utility Board – have and will continue to play important roles in building a strong and healthy Springfield.

Our city is fortunate to have a very strong partner in our Chamber of Commerce. The Springfield Chamber membership has grown from about 400 members in 1995 to 1,000 members in 2009. The growth reflects the diversity of the Springfield business community, strong leadership by the Chamber Board and support from the community.

Small business is the force behind economic success and job creation. The Chamber of commerce is a cornerstone for the foundation of a strong local economy. In 2010 it will be

critical that we maintain our close partnership with the Chamber.

Region wide, we see numerous opportunities for partnerships. In October, nearly 200 people participated in an Economic Summit, with the goal of stimulating a renewed focus on Job Creation, partnerships and providing support and encouragement for those sectors of our local community that remain strong.

The summit was yet another reminder that our local economy is not restricted by the city limits of Springfield. Job retention and creation throughout Lane County is important. In 2010 we must take a close look at how we approach economic development in the region. We must focus and strengthen the economic development efforts of the Lane Metro Partnership to make sure that we are in sync with today's economic realities. Our relationships with the city of Eugene and Lane County need to be strong. I believe we can move forward together while recognizing the unique needs of each jurisdiction. I am looking forward to working with Mayors, City Councilors the Commissioners and leaders throughout the county to revitalize our future.

As indicated by the keynote speaker of the Summit, Dr. Richard Lariviere President of the University of Oregon, our hope for economic recovery will be greatly improved by insuring our higher education systems remain strong and vital. We are so proud of the quality of students produced in our metro area. Our higher education facilities, including: the University of Oregon, Lane Community College, Northwest Christian University, Eugene Bible College and Pioneer Pacific College all attract students from around the world. Our Bright Future depends on a

strong, healthy Higher Education system and I'm confident we are nurturing our future leaders right here at home.

Public Safety:

Like educated minds, Public Safety is essential for a vibrant community. I'd like to thank the men and women of both the Police and Fire & Life Safety Departments who daily put their lives on the line to serve and protect our citizens. Springfield is a great place to raise a family in part because of your tireless efforts. Would all present and past members of those teams, please stand today and allow us to acknowledge you?

In February we will open Springfield's Municipal Jail. I can't say enough about the folks that worked so hard to get us to this point. They too, are truly dedicated to improving our city. Yet it is the Springfield voters that deserve the most credit. Time after time you step up and commit tax dollars to work for positive change. Thank you for putting your trust in your local government.

I am confident that the opening of the jail will be a deterrent for crime in this city. If not, the criminals will have a new space to realize the consequences of their actions.

In June, we also dedicated the beautiful new Thurston area firestation. The new station replaced an outdated building with one that will serve the area for decades to come. While the process took time, the firefighters were patient as the construction was completed and they were able to move into the new home.

While the challenges I've laid out before you are real, our resolve is clear. To help us meet these challenges, the City Council adopted the City's first Strategic Plan to continue our MISSION of: Making the City of Springfield a Desirable and Preferred Place to Live and Work!

The plan set out five GOALS:

- ✓ To Offer Financially Responsible and Stable Government Services
- ✓ To Encourage Community and Economic Development Revitalization
- ✓ To Enhance Public Safety
- ✓ To Maintain and Improve Infrastructure and Facilities
- ✓ To Preserve the Hometown Feel, Livability and Environmental Quality

Each department has set measurable targets that will help demonstrate progress toward attaining these goals. Various work groups have also been using the plan to improve teamwork across departments by saving employee time, enhancing employee morale and cutting costs. It is a pragmatic way of doing business and it seems to fit Springfield perfectly.

We continue working towards a more environmentally responsible future. This past summer, we broke ground on a new type of redevelopment at the city's heart. For more than 100 years, the Springfield Mill Race has been a part of Springfield's heritage. This historic waterway flows from the Middle Fork of the Willamette, near Clearwater Park, along the southern portions of downtown Springfield, and rejoin the Willamette at Island Park.

The long-envisioned Mill Race Ecosystem Restoration Project is underway. This project is an exciting and historic event for Springfield and represents a critical step toward revitalizing the economic, recreational, and environmental benefits the Mill Race traditionally provided the community

This project would not have been possible without the dedicated work completed by the Oregon delegation, not only to secure appropriations, but also to keep the Corps of Engineers focused on the need in the face of many other priorities.

It is an exciting project and as I've said before, I look forward to welcoming eagles, heron and salmon to downtown Springfield.

Conclusion:

As we embark on a new decade of Springfield's legacy - we celebrate our city's fortitude and creativity, which has unleashed the spirit of innovation. As we "Get Back" and recognize the history of our city - we should do so with faith in a strong future of an efficient blend of private and public partnerships, which will continue to build and effective plan for generations to come.