

Message from the Mayor Feb. 20, 2009

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We received a tremendous blow last week with the announcement of the closing of the Kellwood facility here in Trenton. They are our largest industrial project, our biggest utility customer and their exit in July will be felt not only in Trenton but all over the Gibson County area. It is an unbelievable loss to our local economy. I'm thinking now about the 249 people who will not be stopping at our retail stores after work or buying gas or eating in our restaurants. I am also thinking of the \$45,000 dollars in annual net profit that our utility company will be losing on top of the \$25,000 loss we already experienced with the exodus of Quebecor World. But worse than all of that is the loss of 249 more jobs in Trenton. My heart goes out to everybody who has lost their job in Trenton. If we could stop it, we would. In the past year, we have lost around 350 industrial jobs and for Trenton that is devastating.

Is it the end of the world? Well, I cannot answer that for everyone. Certainly some will feel this more than others and some may not feel it at all but I want everyone to know that this will in no way deter us from searching for new opportunity, trying to find new ways to prosper, coming up with new solutions to old problems, or making what we already possess work for us. This is a nationwide problem, as I'm sure you are aware of, and times are going to be hard for some time but we must keep looking forward and not pass up any chance to create new jobs and stimulate our economy. I wish I could promise you that all our jobs in Trenton were secure or that there was something the city could do to keep an industry or business from leaving but I can't. Certainly if there were, we would do all we could to do so.

Some good news I received recently was that the rumors about Gibson General Hospital closing are not true. In speaking with an administrator at the hospital, I was assured that the facility had no intention of leaving or closing. Not only can we not do without the emergency services and healthcare they provide but the hospital employs numerous people and dumps huge amounts of revenues into the Trenton community. I don't want to imagine Trenton without the hospital and I know you don't either.

All of these and many other matters were discussed last Wednesday at the City Council retreat at City Hall. Yeah, I know if

you don't go anywhere, it's not a retreat but you have to remember, the council has to hold public meetings, so we stay in town. It was a chance for us to all sit in the same room and talk about what we've done, what we have planned to do, and what we would like to see done. All of the Aldermen had lots of ideas and positive things to say and understand that we need to face our problems with jobs, retail and entertainment opportunities, infrastructure, keeping our city clean and safe, etc... and are striving to come up with ways to entice and fund these projects. We got many things accomplished and it turned out to be day well spent.

One of the problems they are dealing with right now is whether or not to allow Sunday beer sales from noon till 6:00. The way public opinion is shaping up at this point is about 2 to 1 in favor of Sunday beer sales. Those in favor argue that it keeps people in town spending their money giving the tax revenues to the city, supporting our retail stores and that we already sell beer 19 hours a day 6 days a week anyway. Those in opposition site religious and safe driving reasons. I feel like the council will want to act on this issue in the next couple of months.

I had the pleasure this week of writing a proclamation honoring the First Baptist Church and the celebration of the old church building at the corner of North High and Huntingdon Streets. The First Baptists may be the oldest congregation in Trenton but certainly it is the oldest black congregation. They are teaching their young people about the history of the church, which I think is a wonderful thing to do. It gives them a sense of who they are and that's something I think we are losing as a culture. Have you sat down with the young people in your family and talked about where you came from and the history involved? Some of the most treasured times with my grandparents were those that were spent learning about their past and how they lived, worked and played; who were their grandparents and parents and their perception of the world. Congratulations to First Baptist for their success and their commitment to their young people and thank you for what you mean to Trenton.

I told you a couple of months ago that we suspected that some monies had been tampered with over the past several years here at City Hall. We have had auditors from the State Comptroller's Office here all week and if there has been wrong doing, I am confident they will find it and those involved. When they do, we are going to make

every effort to make sure it never happens again and those responsible will face the consequences of their actions.

I know that times are tough and they are probably going to get tougher before they get better but I know that someday this too will pass. Until then we can shop right here in town, we can recycle, we can keep our city clean, we can help our neighbors and support our local churches, schools and community organizations. Trenton still is a great place to live even though we are going through a tough patch. What can you do to help? What can you do to make it even better? I mention in every message that there are worthy organizations all over this city that need people just like you. I can get you connected with a group if you contact me. Trenton has the potential to grow but we need positive, energetic, forward-thinking citizens to accomplish our goals. Many of those people have already stepped forward and we are a better city for it. Trenton is far from dying and even though Trenton's not perfect, we're working on it. Till next time, God Bless Trenton.