

Message from the Mayor #45 06-12-09

It has been a long process, but we have finally finished the City Budget for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. As you probably guessed, we had to make several pretty deep cuts in order to balance the budget. The Budget Committee, made up of Budget Chairman Jim Overall, City Aldermen Ricky Jackson and Joe Hammonds, City Recorder Sammy Dickey, Head Bookkeeper Leigh Anne Reynolds and I, have been at work since February trying to cut expenditures and still provide the same services you are accustomed to receiving. We feel we have accomplished that with few exceptions.

The 2008-2009 tax revenues fell about \$300,000 short with \$90,000 of that figure being attributed to property taxes. Shortfalls in local option sales tax, county tax, business tax, state sales tax, and court fines and costs added to deficits in revenues. I think when you see where we fall short, you realize how important to us the sale of city stickers and collecting for curbside limb and furniture pickups become. About the only taxes that do not seem to be in decline are our liquor, beer and mixed drink taxes. Matter of fact, they were up a fraction this year. Beer and liquor account for more than \$250,000 of tax revenues each year. Think what you will but it helps pay the bills.

The 2008-09 budget was \$4,070,641 and the 2009-10 budget will be \$3,771,686. That's a \$298,955 cut. What that means for most city departments is a substantial or complete cut of capital outlay which translates to no new equipment this year. The city will also not be giving any raises in the 2009-10 year, although we were able to save their small Christmas bonus's which we felt were important to our employees. It is difficult to give pay raises with tax dollars when so many taxpayers are out of work. Even so, we were most relieved about not having to lay off any full time employees. Ultimately, let's all pray for better times.

The city street trucks run Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. We went to a three day week some months ago when gas was \$3.50 to \$4.00 a gallon. Most cities run once a week and some run once a month. Please be patient with us if we don't pick up your street refuse every day. Also, when you have loads that we have to bring out a backhoe to load, we have to charge you a little for the pickup. Your tax dollars pay for regular curb service three times a week, which we feel is sufficient. We are losing money on street pickup as it is, so please understand when we have to charge for extra service. We are trying to keep Trenton picked up so please help us anyway you can.

Speaking of keeping Trenton picked up, in a recent ride-thru of the city, most of us are still doing an outstanding job with our properties. I see very little high grass (although there is some) and very little paper. Speaking of paper, when it is on your property, please pick it up. No one else is going to and if you leave it then it will end up somewhere else like a fence row, ditch, or storm drain causing a drainage problem on top of just being unsightly. It would take 2 or 3 minutes to do and make your property look much better.

Many of the houses you are calling me about with high grass or trash problems are a product of the economy. Most of them have been taken over by banks from off somewhere and we are in a constant battle to get these banks and mortgage companies to mow and take care of them. You can imagine how much a bank in New York City cares about a house they have foreclosed on in Trenton Tennessee. I promise you we are aware of them and are trying to get the each situation fixed. The city is already behind on all our summer projects because of the spring rains. We just cannot cut the grass of properties that are not ours. We do not have the time or the manpower.

June 20th is our next Saturday on the Square event and it is shaping up to be a real fun night. Riptide, a local band, will be performing around 6 o'clock and then the Blues Berry Jam Band will take the stage at 7. There will be food, crafts and lots of fun for you to

share with your friends and neighbors down around the court square. The event starts around 5:30 so if you never have been, give it a try.

The Citizens for Action in Trenton will be meeting Tuesday Night at 6 in the Teapot Room at City Hall. This is an opportunity for you to make suggestions about what you think will make Trenton a better place to live. If you have questions about why things are as they are, we can answer them for you. If we don't see you, then we just figure you are happy with everything.

I want to take a little space here to thank all of the people that volunteer their time to serve on committees and boards that benefit the city. The Park Board, the Teapot Festival Committee, the Cemetery Committee, the Historical Society, the Retail and Industrial Board, The Pedestrian Plaza Committee, the Teapot Museum docents, the City Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning and Appeals, the Freed House Committee, the Gibson General Health-Care Foundation, all the people that volunteer in our schools, all the people that volunteer with the ball leagues during the year, and those people I have forgotten to mention make Trenton a better place to live. We want Trenton to be not just a place you drive through, but a place to stop and enjoy; a place to raise families; a place to call home; and a place to be proud of. Thank you to all that make it that way.

We have made some headway in the past few years and we are passing through some challenging times right now, but we can't let up or give up. All of us need to be reminded to Shop Trenton every chance we get. We need to be reminded that a clean, well groomed community draws people in. We need to drive safely on our streets and protect our young people who are enjoying some summer vacation time. We have the greatest city in the world to live in but Trenton, like ourselves, can also grow and be better. We all know Trenton isn't perfect but we're working on it. Till next time, God Bless Trenton.