



### **State of the City**

Members of Rotary, City Government, honored guests, friends, family and Citizens of Torrington; this past year has been one of intense labor and magnificent promise. I am glad to have my grandfather here this morning because his presence always reminds me of how important family is. You all may know, that I am a proud member of a family of farmers who work from sun up to sun down, and who tend to view things in terms of growing seasons; I am here today to say that the seeds of change have been planted. We have all worked hard over the last year and we are beginning to see the fruits of our labor.

Since December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005 so many wonderful things have happened in Torrington. The community has banded together throughout the year; literally on all fronts our City has been succeeding. The Torrington High School Boys Basketball Team became the new State Champions and brought pride to the school, and to the City as a whole. Over the summer, the Warner Theatre played host to the premiere of the riveting film Flyboys. The event brought Governor Rell to Torrington and showed that Torrington is the place to be for arts and entertainment. The Fourth of July was celebrated with a bang as fireworks lit up the sky over the East side. Children and families were treated to a wonderful night complete with music, food and a stellar display

of fireworks. To herald in the holiday season, the Light Up Main Street event brought together an amazing 500+ families, for music, and a chance to appreciate the many things we have to be thankful for.

As I reflect upon the last year I see so much accomplished and even more to do in the coming year. They say that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. We have indeed made many strides in our journey, not only myself and the staff at city hall, but all of you as well. Last year I spoke of the need to have a relentless focus and resolve for cooperation so that we may accomplish anything. And now I see that our formula for achievement is working.

My administration took office with many goals in mind; however there are four top priorities that stand out; education, fiscal responsibility, public safety, and economic development. I would like to take this opportunity to address them and to share just how much has been done in what I must admit has been the fastest year of my life.

In my inaugural speech I said that the accreditation of our high school will be a priority in my administration. Over the past year, I have been meeting regularly with our superintendent, Dr. Susan O'Brien. The Board of Education budget needed an increase in funding in the 2006-2007 budget year. To that end, the City Council and Board of Finance passed a budget that gave the Board of Education the tools they requested.

I have been continually attending board of education meetings to make sure that the city and school system are on the same page on every issue. I plan on remaining involved in the process of accreditation through our board and academic leaders. Giving our school leaders the appropriate equipment so that they may accomplish their goals was

the first step of this process. I firmly believe that because the City and Board of Education have worked together; we will begin to gather the rewards of our hard work.

Our school system is not the only place that needed a helping hand. Torrington is growing rapidly and with growth come expenses. The City must use tax revenue to fund this expansion. However, we have put into practice a firm stance of fiscal responsibility so that your dollars are accounted for and put to good use. In the last budget cycle, I transformed the way the municipal budget is crafted with the creation of the Budget Subcommittee. This subcommittee was designed to bring those people who ultimately have the final say on your tax dollars into the budgeting process much earlier and more often. The City of Torrington found that this system allowed not only time, but large sums of money to be saved. We took the numbers off the page and it allowed the 18 men and women on the boards of safety, council, and finance as well as myself to have a larger perspective of the direction that the city needed to head.

In the end, there were nearly \$1 million dollars in budget cuts made and the net budget increase on the municipal side was only 2% despite major increases that we've all felt with oil, electricity and other essential needs. As a demonstration of my administrations fiscal responsibility last year, we cut City expenditures from a previous two year average of 5.68% (4.62% in 04 and 6.73% in 05) to 3.15%. Of that 3.15% the greater majority was contractually necessary and legally obligated. Even after the budget has been enacted, I personally review each and every requisition for purchases. In short, fiscal responsibility means watching your pennies so that the dollars can take care of themselves.

The City's efforts helped slow escalation and made room for the Board of Education's need to restructure. As we move into the budget season for 2007 I promise to keep your bottom line ever present. I will personally weed through all the municipal budget requests so that expenditures that are made are the correct ones.

For example, as the chief elected official, I feel that spending tax dollars on your safety is not only warranted, but necessary. One of my top priorities is that the residents of Torrington are safe and our streets are welcoming. During my campaign one of my promises was to ensure that our first responders acted quickly when it came to cardiac emergencies. As Mayor, I established the Advisory and Monitoring committee for the Emergency Medical Services. I am proud to say that since the committee's inception Torrington has applied and is about to become a federally recognized Heart Safe Community, which means our response rates for cardiac emergencies exceed the national average for every municipality of a similar population scale. We have also placed defibrillators in most, if not all, of the City's public buildings.

Not only are our streets healthier they are safer. A year ago I stood here and heard the citizens of Torrington protest about the drug problem that our city and other cities like us face. Because of this I have created positions for four new police officers, who will allow us to take the War on Drugs to the streets. We have an excellent Police Force who have been acting diligently over the past year to reduce this threat to our community. In the course of the last 10 months alone our Narcotics division, consisting of 1 sergeant and two officers, has made 110 drug arrests, and seized approximately \$427,000 dollars worth of drugs, cash and cars. This does not include a house, purchased

with drug money, which is currently undergoing the judicial process. Simply put crime does not pay in Torrington.

With the hard work of the Torrington Police Department we have sent a strong message that our city belongs to law-abiding citizens. My administration has made your safety its main concern and we have been, and will continue to keep you and your loved ones protected. But that's not enough, in the next year you can expect more initiatives with regards to public safety.

The final priority of my campaign is economic development. Our City is most certainly growing by leaps and bounds. However, we have also seen some hard times this year, with Timken officially closing its doors and Royal Precision doing the same. I made every attempt to keep those companies here with countless calls, meetings, visits with employees and with the State Department of Economic and Community Development.

However from challenging times comes hope, and I am always overjoyed when I remember how the community rallied with events like the job fairs, held at the Chamber of Commerce, which brought people together and created new opportunities. When everything settled down I remember thinking as one chapter of our history closes a new one begins with evermore possibility. For instance, Torrington has seen a boom in niche manufacturing. While all over America we are seeing less of the large industrial giants; here in Torrington we are seeing small manufacturing companies comprised of 100 - 200 employees springing up and expanding more and more.

We also have many national retailers noticing how promising Torrington's commerce market has become. Today, we have seen companies pouring millions of

dollars into Torrington. According to an article written in the Waterbury Republican in late August 2006, 28 million dollars was to be spent on commercial development projects up to that point, which is 95% higher than the entirety of projects in 2003. Just six months after the article was written the city saw an additional \$11 million dollars on top of that, totaling nearly \$39 million dollars in commercial development projects; up approximately \$5 million dollars from the previous year. What this means is that we are succeeding in taking the tax burden off the shoulders of our residents.

The City of Torrington has hired a new economic development director who has begun working with our reinvigorated economic development commission, planning and zoning commission and other city departments on a strategic marketing plan. This will allow us to streamline the influx of development so that we may harness it for the overall highest and best usage for our residents.

Thanks to the hard work of previous administrations and the state delegation, legislation was passed in Hartford that allowed for the creation of an enterprise corridor zone in Torrington and Winsted. This was a great first step; however the second step, a more daunting one, is recruiting even more businesses to the city while ensuring companies already residing in Torrington stay, and at the same time encouraging them to expand. Over the past year my administration has begun to move that second step forward. We've seen Dymax Corporation move all of their operations into Torrington, Gregor Technologies has begun the process of building a new larger complex, Screen Tech has moved to town from Oxford, McCoy Limited has also recently expanded, and RBC, which was on the verge of leaving Torrington came to the Mayor's office and

worked with us and decided to stay and grow in the City, and the list goes on. We've seen a host of new businesses emerge from Jill's Cuisine to small start ups.

All one has to do is take a drive around town and view all the construction. Personally, I enjoyed watching the crane over the Warner Theater and still try to imagine how spectacular our new Nancy Marine Studio will look when it is completed. Most importantly we are beginning to see more and more jobs in Torrington. This year alone 170 new jobs were created. With the implementation and more importantly active marketing of the Enterprise Corridor Zone we anticipate even more jobs created in the manufacturing sector next year. We have also made amazing strides in the downtown plan. Due to the cooperation of the Torrington Development Corporation, State Delegation, and City Staff as well as myself we have reached the farthest point ever with the completion of the Environmental Impact Evaluation. And, we are now moving forward with the next phases. Yes, it is very apparent to me that things are happening in Torrington. Everywhere I look I can see and feel the seeds of all this hard work blossoming.

In closing, over the past year I have remained accessible to everyone. Always returning your calls or emails and listening to your concerns. As time goes on I will remain available to all the residents in Torrington. Giving every person a voice has been a source of great pride for me personally.

Finally, I would like to end with a humbled thank you to all of you for allowing me to have this opportunity to put my heart and soul into this great City. In my office there is a running joke that I am married to Torrington, and even though I have a girlfriend now, I am happy to stand before you today and renew my vows to the City that

I love with all my heart. In one year we have done so much together, we have planted so many seeds and are beginning to see them take root. It is my greatest hope to stand here again next year and sing the praises of all of you as we take further hold of our community's limitless future.