

# **ANNUAL STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

**July 14, 2008**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Good evening and welcome to tonight's city council meeting. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to share with you a few of our major accomplishments over the past year and outline our objectives for the coming year. These objectives, or goals, were developed during our annual strategic planning session held earlier this year. The Council's Strategic Plan, which the public can access on the City's web site, sets forth the Council's Vision for the City. This Vision, along with our annual goal setting process, provides direction for the future of our community. In addition to sharing our accomplishments and goals, I want to discuss the challenges facing the City that have arisen as a result of the economic downturn and how we plan to address them and still provide essential services to all of the citizens.

But first let me focus on a few of our positives accomplishments of the past year.

## **LAST YEAR'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

1. *The construction and operation of Fire Station No. 4.*

One of our most significant accomplishments was the construction and staffing of our newest fire station, No. 4, which is located at the corner of Mitchell Road and Fowler Road. Prior to the opening of Fire Station 4, all emergencies that occurred in the northeast area of Ceres had to be serviced by Fire Station No. 1, located next to City Hall. This new station will considerably lower the response time to the west side of town, resulting in the saving of lives and property. The money used to construct this fire station came from redevelopment revenues and developer fees and a portion of the staffing is funded through the City's community facilities district that is required on all new housing.

2. *Began Construction of the New Community Center.*

After many years of planning, the City initiated construction of our new Community Center. In 1985, the old community center was demolished to make room for a new police station. Since that time, the citizens of Ceres had to scramble to locate meeting places. Starting next year, that will change. Based on the current schedule, this time next year I will be giving my state of the City address in the main assembly hall of a new state of the art community center. It is the Council's vision that this facility will be one that all of our citizens can enjoy and be proud of.

A few of the many highlights of the new community center are:

- 25,000 SF facility
- large auditorium that can seat 392
- small auditorium that can seat 266
- kitchen
- fitness/exercise room
- arts & crafts room
- senior citizen activity room
- teen activity room
- 10 PC computer room with internet access
- meeting rooms for 20-25 people
- City recreation office

All funding for this project will come from redevelopment revenues.

### 3. *Construction of the Whitmore Interchange.*

We received word in February of this year that the California Transportation Commission had fully funded the new Whitmore Interchange. We started work on this interchange 10 years ago and we are very happy to report that things are finally happening. The bids were opened on June 4 and Caltrans is planning on awarding the contract in August. Construction is expected to start

around the middle of this September and should be completed by December of 2010. You may have noticed that some work has already commenced with the demolition and removal of buildings in the future right of way of the interchange. The interchange will not only correct a long standing circulation problem in our City, but will also serve as a positive symbol to the thousands of daily travelers who use Highway 99 of the progress occurring in Ceres.

#### 4. *Organizational Assessment.*

City government is not just about constructing and maintaining infrastructure, it is also about running an efficient and cost effective operation that responds to our citizen's needs. In that regard the Council established as one of its strategic planning goals the provision of quality services to meet the community's needs and assuring that the City staff is sufficiently trained and equipped, overall. In response, the Council initiated a multi-phased organizational assessment of City operations. Specific project goals include:

- Reviewing the entire organization to identify efficiencies that can be created to improve City operations;
- Recommending changes to the organization structure, staffing and business processes that will increase overall effectiveness; and

- Developing an action plan to assist the City in implementing recommendations.

The project was initiated in July 2007 with the project team collecting and reviewing pertinent City reports, studies and documents, the project team conducting interviews with key staff members and the issuance of a citywide staff survey. We anticipate the report will greatly assist us in providing our citizens with cost effective and efficient services, particularly during this period of reduced public sector revenues.

#### 5. *Passage of Measure H*

In November 2007, Ceres voters passed Measure H with a large margin of support. It will provide seriously needed funding to expand our police and fire services. For a city the size of Ceres, fire and police staffing has been substantially below what is needed to address the crimes and fire service calls that occur each day. In recognition of this, Ceres' citizens were asked to consider a ½ cent sales tax to increase the number of firefighters and police officers. Measure H passed with more than 75 percent of voters approving it.

Measure H truly represented teamwork at its finest, with citizens and local government getting together to accomplish an

important goal. A citizens' committee carried the Measure H process, soliciting donations to cover the costs of running the Measure H campaign; they manned the phone banks and went door-to-door to elicit public support for the measure and they helped formulate the 10-year spending plan. The City Council's deepest thanks go out to these volunteers. Time and again it has been shown that successful communities are those in which the citizenry is engaged in the betterment of their own community.

In accordance with State regulations the first revenues collected from Measure H will begin flowing to the City this month. Given the importance of this program to our community, the City Council began implementation as soon as the measure was passed. The Council authorized a general fund loan to allow the recruitment process to begin. We recently formed the Citizen's Oversight Committee which will be tasked to monitor the funds collected and that are spent in accordance with the adopted expenditure plan. They will also review the annual audit. As I will discuss later we are also in the process of hiring the additional firefighters and police officers that will be funded by the Measure H revenues.

6. *Completion of Sam Ryno and Neel Park.*

At the end of last year we completed and opened up two

new neighborhood parks, Sam Ryno and Neel. We have not constructed a neighborhood park in 14 years and these two neighborhoods had been underserved until now. Our children need a place where they can run and play without the fear that is associated with playing in the street. This council has said on more than one occasion that any new master planned communities will make the development, construction and maintenance of parks a part of their plan. We will not allow developments to build out and parks to remain undeveloped weed or dirt patches that create eyesores for the residents and maintenance problems for the city.

7. *The development and adoption of a joint strategic plan with the Ceres School District.*

When I was sworn in to my first term as Mayor, I was handed a report by Chief de Werk that listed various statistics about our community. One of the statistics dealt with our school district. After reviewing the report, I called Dr. Hanline and asked if we could get together to discuss the relationship between the school district and the city. Dr. Hanline and I enjoyed a nice breakfast and discussed the many benefits that could be achieved if the school and the city could work closer together. What came out of that breakfast meeting has turned into quite the

collaboration. First, we created what we call a 2+2+2 ad hoc committee. This is made up of the superintendent, city manager, the board president, the mayor, a board member and a city council member.

Our meetings have greatly improved communications between the two agencies and have stimulated significant discussion regarding how we can partner our resources to improve the quality of life of Ceres' citizens. In April of this year, the School Board and City Council held a joint meeting and adopted a groundbreaking joint agency Strategic Plan. The plan articulates our common values, contains a vision statement and focuses on the following key objectives: the citizens, the social environment, and public safety. The plan identifies nineteen (19) objectives to be accomplished over the next two years that addresses the sharing of facilities, joint infrastructure planning and funding, crime and gang prevention and intervention, workforce/economic development, community services and joint facility maintenance. The plan establishes clear and measurable objectives that staff can be held accountable for. I am particularly excited about the opportunity to develop an educationally focused gang intervention program as part of the City's overall gang enforcement program. It has been well documented that those communities who implement proactive prevention and