

State of the City 2009

May 19, 2009

Thank you for having me come speak with you today.

As I have said many times in the past, I truly enjoy speaking with you about our beloved community; the progress we have made and the challenges and opportunities that we face.

And clearly in today's economy and in today's world, we do face many challenges.

2009 just like 2008 was a very trying time for our families and many of our local businesses.

The softening of our national economy has impacted DeSoto County.

The financial markets, the housing markets, and other sectors of our economy have been hit hard. Many of us are facing tough times at home working hard to make ends meet.

It is times like these that I am truly thankful for our strong and resilient workforce in DeSoto County and the leadership provided by many of our community leaders.

Many of whom I see with us today.

As we continue to watch the economy, I feel certain that it will improve and I am proud to say Southaven will be leading the way for this growth and renewed prosperity.

But for today, I hope you will indulge me as we take a look back at 2009 and a look forward to 2010 and beyond.

Each day, we are reminded about the touch and go nature of our current national economy.

Economists debate the extent of the recession and elected officials in Washington borrow billions upon billions of dollars to advance called stimulus packages. With so much confusion and ever growing doubt, it remains refreshing and, to be quite honest, it is extremely satisfying to tell each of you that Southaven, Mississippi remains financially strong and well prepared to continue to handle these tough times.

We remain committed to providing the public services our residents demand and deserve, and we will continue to provide these services at a low costs to our tax-payers.

2009 witnessed yet another year where our local economy grew, and I remain committed to making sure Southaven continues to be open and ready for business, especially in these uncertain times.

I am also proud to report that Southaven witnessed the creation of 668 new jobs in 2009 and the creation of 231 new businesses.

Recently, Southaven, and our sound and conservative financial planning and budgetary policies, were recognized by S&P and their credit rating bureau with a rating of AA-.

This double “A” rating signifies a strong commitment to our financial strength and affords public fund investors the knowledge that Southaven is open and ready for business!

As you know, credit rating bureaus such as S&P and Moody’s simply do not hand our double A ratings.

These ratings are earned and built upon solid financial foundations and a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility. We are working to rebuild our cash reserves that were depleted to

accommodate the severe storm clean-up. We have over 189 million in assets which a 23M increase over 2008.

I believe deeply in the transparency of government and web-casting our meetings is just another step towards bringing your city government closer to those we represent and for whom we work.

In keeping with our efforts to commit to a “greener” city government, Southaven also sponsored multiple recycling days and I continue to be proud that these services are provided in part with grant funds from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. We also have recycle trailers at no cost to us as taxpayers. Yet these efforts kept over 234 tons of goods out of our landfills last year alone, an increase of 33% from the previous year. We also are requesting proposals for “mixed” curb side recycling from companies that offer an award program. The city will try to pay for the first couple of months and then have the users either opt out or add the cost to the water bill. We have been designated as a Tree City by Tree City USA. Not only has the city moved to be green but also the private sector with the Harley Davidson, The Filling Station, and Covenant Bank are Green Infrastructure Developments.

Also, we have built upon our commitment to our Stateline/Main Street area.

As many of you know, I was raised in the “original part of town” and I remain committed to its ongoing viability both as a business district and as a vibrant residential area.

Since 2001, we have invested over \$20 million in improvements to our Stateline/Main Street historical part of Southaven. This past year landscaping the Interstate Islands improves the look as you enter our city. A new part time code officer helps keep our roadways clear of bandit signs even on the weekends. The location of the DeSoto Health and Wellness Center along with the Dept of Health Clinic are new additions to the area. Interstate Bar BQ is under an expansion, the

old Circle K was removed from the site. This year we can look to a renovated county building and Fred's, revitalization of SW corner of Brookhaven and Hwy 51, a new Goodwill Collection Center and renovation of the existing building and renovation of a restaurant at Rasco and 51 for a new deli. Also, the announcement of 100 new jobs in the Industrial Park by Fiskars will be located in the area.

Due to our investments, an increasing part of our local economy has proved to be our local tourism industry.

I cannot overstate the importance of Snowden Grove Park and our Green brook Softball Complex and the impact these facilities have on our local economy, and I applaud our community for having the vision to create and support such fine facilities.

We estimate that these parks are responsible for some \$3 to \$4 million injected into our local economy annually.

The City alone see's nearly \$2 million in direct revenue generated by our parks and recreational programs and services.

Municipal parks clearly benefit a community, however, without the dedicated service of the men and women of our police, fire and emergency medical services, I doubt Southaven would be the city she is today.

Under the leadership of Police Chief Tom Long and Fire Chief Mike Brackin, our public safety departments continue to set the standard for performance and professionalism.

When push comes to shove, there is no group of emergency responders I'd rather have representing our city than the Southaven Fire and Police Departments. We have the best Fire

Rating in the state and our crime rate of 1.78 compared to MS at 2.91, the National average at 4.54 and to Memphis at 19.25 proves that we are in good hands from the men and women who serve us in our Public Safety Depts. Southaven's crime statistics remains well below the national average and significantly below that of our neighbors to the north.

This does not happen by accident.

Our Fire Training Facility just received certification and we took delivery of 2 new pumpers costing over 1M dollars. The public relations division completed another Citizens Police Academy and we now have over 270 graduates which has helped increase the personnel assigned to our Volunteers in Police Service (VIP's). This group is estimated to save over ¼ million dollars in volunteer hours that otherwise paid employees would have to be assigned.

It is important that our citizens understand the value we place on our public safety departments. The city will continue to invest in these areas and that is why you see over 55% of our GF budget go to Public Safety.

We are reducing spending where we can without eliminating services.

Sales Tax revenues fell some 500k from 2009 to 2008 but we had budgeted for the shortfall. The first 6 months of this FY we saw declining sales tax again. However, our past 2 months of collections, we have seen an increase of 100k over last year.

Other areas continue to show some signs of improvements. In 2009 we saw 145 new home permits issued and are 47% to that goal this year already. In 2009 we saw 6 new commercial buildings, 3 additions, and 68 renovations. While these numbers are not what we were used to a couple of years ago they are beginning to climb.

One of the major changes the city encountered was the addition of 3 new Aldermen (Hale, Payne, and Brooks). We have seen changes in our City Clerk now being served by Sheila Heath and our new IT Director Chris Shelton. Not to mention, our Fire Department will be under the direction of Chief White and Deputy Chief Roger Thornton in mid June.

Things are every changing and we must be able to adapt to those changes in order to continue to move forward. And I will say it appears that all of us old and new have the same goal and that is to make Southaven the Top of MS not just geographically but in every way.

Other areas of Service:

Utility Dept. and Engineering

Autumn Woods Drainage Improvements – cost \$2million (95% grant MEMA FEMA) design approx. 90% complete (scheduled complete end of June) 60 days funding agency review and permit acquisition and 90 days bidding estimated construction Fall 2010 thru Summer 2011

Elmore Road Widening – Revising southern section design to 3 lanes and acquisition of ROW on Northern Section estimated design completion and ROW acquisition summer 2010 begin construction end of 2010 to early 2011

Hurricane Creek Sewer Project – 3 of 8 phases complete, applied for COE Section 592 to fund (75%) remaining \$7 million, SRF Facilities plan approved for (25%)match funding by MDEQ, Estimated COE Funding to be approved Nov. 2010 and continue construction early 2011

Summerwood/Whitten Place Sewer Project – SRF Facilities Plan approved for (100%) funding project, project est. cost \$5 million, design to begin fall/winter 2010, construction begin summer 2011

Church Road Widening – final change order approved construction to be completed summer 2010 with final signal install at Swinnea

Utilities Master Plan and I/I Study – working with COE Section 22 to fund (50/50) a Utilities Master Plan and I/I Study est. starting study 4th quarter 2010. Plan will complete utilities mapping, locate i/i issues with sewer system, water system hydraulic model, etc. estimated cost \$1-1.5 million, city plans to provide approx. 20% in kind services to qualify as part of match.

Streets:

Tulane Road Overlay

Stateline Road Overlay

Airways Blvd. Resurfacing (under construction) (ARRA Project)

Getwell Road (Construct this year)

Traffic Signals:

(1) Millbranch @ Stateline (Complete)

(2) Nail Rd @ Getwell Rd (Under construction) (ARRA Project)

(3) Central Parkway @ Getwell Rd (Under construction) (ARRA) Project)

Drainage:

- (1) Drainage Improvements in Dickens Place Subdivision
- (2) Bank Stabilization in Stargate Subdivision
- (3) Bank Stabilization on Horn Lake Creek @ Swinnea Rd
- (4) Tuscany Way Bank Stabilization
- (5) Swinnea Road Bank Stabilization @ Horn Lake Creek
- (6) Southaven Creek Bank Stabilization @ Hwy 51
- (7) Martha Ann Drive Drainage Improvements

Cost share between NRCS & H L Creek Drain Dist

Stormwater:

- (1) Renewed MS-4 Permit W/ DEQ for 5 more years
- (2) Issued Permits and made inspections for Construction Site SWPP Plans
- (3) Filed Reports for City facilities SWPP Plan

Water:

- (1) Star Landing Road Elevated Tank
- (2) Southeast Area Water System Improvements
- (3) Inverness Drive Elevated Tank

Sewer:

Obtained Emergency Generator and wired Lift Stations for Quick Connect
(FEMA GRANT)

GIS:

- (1) Developed Base Map with 911 addresses to assist Police Department in implementing the new INTERACT DISPATCH SYSTEM.
- (2) Developed new Redistricting Map for City Ward boundaries.
- (3) Mapped Fire Hydrant locations
- (4) Revised Zoning Map
- (5) Revised map for 2010 Census
- (6) Continued mapping water, sewer and storm drains in GIS system.

Parks:

In 2009, we had roughly 1,062 participants in our youth baseball league

Over 450 in softball

Over 1500 soccer participants (up from 500)

Some 100 cheer participants

409 youth football participants

674 adults in our flag football and indoor soccer

And over 1100 in our Forever Young group (400 member increase)

As successful as our parks and recreational programs have been, we remain committed to increasing our services and our capabilities. One such example will be Music at Snowden Grove

which will begin June 15th. It will be held at the house and you will bring your own chairs and coolers and sit back and enjoy local bands do their thing.

To this end, our park employees are working on their certifications through the National Playground Safety Institute.

We are also working on implementing new web-based technologies into our baseball/softball operations, where highlights and up to date scoring can be text messaged to web base phones of family members of teams and players who are unable to attend the games of their loved ones.

We even have an iPod app for Snowden.

Improvements to our community parks are quality of life issues as well as economic development issues. Again, our parks are a driving force of our local tourism industry and that simply would not be the case had the residents not supported our comprehensive parks program.

We learned years ago that many industries and employers look at a community's overall quality of life prior to making their commitment to re-locate or expand their business.

For 2009 and beyond, our game plan is simple: stick to the fundamentals of good government. Protect our citizens and their property. Continue to provide award winning public services at low costs. Continue to aggressively pay down our municipal debt.

The City of Southaven is clearly not a city to rest on our past success as we continue to seek out cost-effective ways to advance our community.

We must remain on the offensive when it comes to public safety, and as mayor, I will continue to make public safety our number one priority.

In closing, we are committed to making a positive difference in the lives of our resident's.

We, as a nation and local community may be facing some challenging days ahead.

Rest assured that your Southaven government is working hard to ensure our continued prosperity.

We will continue to stay on the offensive with regard to our public safety.

We will continue to provide award winning public services

We will continue to serve as a municipal leader in innovation and advancement

We will continue to cultivate our economic environment and do our part to ensure the sustainability and growth of our local economy as our resident's and business's stand ready to play a leading role in our nation's economic recovery.

And we will continue to serve as the model of open and efficient government in our region.

Webster's dictionary defines "haven" as: "a place of safety: a place offering favorable opportunities or conditions"

I can think of no better phrase or mindset to call home, Southaven, Mississippi: a place of safety.

As mayor, I will continue the work of leading our city ever mindful of the hard work so many have contributed in years past in paving the road to our bright future.

We will continue to move Southaven forward; prepared for the challenges, turning those challenges into opportunities, and providing a better tomorrow for all our residents.

Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today.

It is truly my honor and privilege to serve as your mayor.

God bless.