

THE CITY OF ZACHARY – MAYOR’S ANNUAL MESSAGE

THE STATE OF THE CITY

January 10th, 2018 was the seventh anniversary of the City’s current administration. The date also commemorates a past year which reflected the City’s continuing recovery from the 2016 August flooding event.

While the many debris piles and other obvious signs of the flood’s damage are now mostly absent, there are still those suffering the effects of loss and the pace of recovery. I would ask that you please continue to keep these residents in your thoughts and prayers. Zachary will not be made whole, until all of its people are.

Zachary’s resilience has enabled the City’s infrastructure to recover through the many improvements realized since the events of 2016. However, drainage issues do remain a primary concern locally, and top the City’s priority list for overdue improvements. While various and new engineering strategies and solutions have been offered; and with millions of dollars from available grant sources having been pursued, the end result remains unchanged. The City has been unable to win support from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in allowing the issuance of required permits that would create needed drainage improvements. While the Corps position may be to “first do no harm”, precious little benefit will ever be realized without the re-engineering of Cypress Bayou. This single tributary remains as the primary deterrent in allowing for the rapid evacuation of storm waters that have plagued Zachary for well over a decade.

East Baton Rouge Parish was awarded \$106 million dollars in October, 2017 with Zachary set to receive \$1.6 million of that amount for local drainage improvement projects. The City proposes to offer as many “hazard mitigation” projects as possible under the grant guidelines, while still making good on the required 25% funds match in order to remain project eligible. Zachary’s overall grant justification and its flood history are especially well defined. Unfortunately, as in the past, the Corps of Engineers rigid “*credo*” and its likely-used contingency may once again create a stumbling block for enabling flood water relief for Zachary. Compounding these issues further is the uncertainty over the future of the Comite River Diversion Canal Project. If completed it would most assuredly provide needed relief for the northern portion of East Baton Rouge Parish, and for those areas downstream.

I would use this means to strongly encourage your active participation in this drainage improvement initiative by contacting your metro-councilman, your local legislators and your state congressional delegation. The prevailing federal interpretations regarding drainage improvement requirements must be relaxed, and the use of sound engineering

strategies and practices should prevail over the more traditional methods of “grubbing and clearing” alone, of those drainage tributaries which has been the past practice.

New and improved roads, water, sewer and utility project management and maintenance have all helped to assure the expedited delivery of convenience and services. These improvements have all been spirited by the continuing “smart growth” model Zachary envisioned for itself not too many years ago; and one which we all continue to benefit from today.

I remain strongly committed in support of the City’s infra-structure workforce, one now smaller than the one we had upon entering office. Collectively, they have demonstrated the ability to get the job done safely, efficiently and professionally. While some communities embrace the philosophy of “doing more with less”, it often comes at a cost. Safety is an area which will never be compromised, and in Zachary we’re equally committed to the safety of our workers, as well as the public they serve.

Zachary Fire and Police each continue to exhibit the response and professionalism synonymous with public safety, service and protection. We are grateful for their service and take great comfort in the peace and the services they each provide.

I would be truly remiss not to mention Zachary’s City Council. Its member’s dedication to public service is demonstrated daily through the many hours of commitment to their respective council districts; and more so through their innate ability to work together for the good of Zachary. We are all better for and appreciative of their efforts.

Zachary’s growth in recent years has demonstrated that local government has become a full-time business, and not just a job or an occupation. If ours was the corporate world, one might be inclined to think of success as being measured simply by “making as much as you can, as fast as you can, for as long as you can”.

This simply doesn’t apply in government service. No one goes into it for the money or for the prestige. Success is measured daily through commitment, hard work and in knowing at day’s end that you’ve left things better than you found them. The great Vince Lombardi summed it up best when he said *“some of us will do our jobs well and some will not, but we will all be judged by only one thing, the result”*.

Let us use the ‘New Year’ to recommit to all that is good in our lives and in our community. When life’s challenges do occur we’ll possess the strength and the peace in knowing that as a community of one, we are many; and therein lay our true strength.

Sincerely,

David Amrhein