

THE CITY OF ZACHARY – MAYOR’S ANNUAL MESSAGE

STATE OF THE CITY

January 14, 2019 celebrated the beginning of the City’s third term in office under the current administration, while also recognizing another year of dedicated efforts by City employees. This fresh start serves to continue positive and effective change for the City and its citizens. The expectations for 2019 are clear with Zachary’s recognition as a leader within the State; “a motivation” which will continue to drive and inspire our efforts.

During 2018 the City of Zachary was blessed with excellent District leadership provided by its elected Council members: Laura O’Brien, Francis Nezianya, Brandon Noel, Ben Cavin and Tommy Womack. Their unselfish and tireless efforts on behalf of those they represent were evidenced daily through positive public feedback. It has been my pleasure to work with and learn from each of them during the past terms. I use this means to personally thank Tommy Womack and Ben Cavin for their years of loyal service on the Council; while also welcoming its newest members, Lael Montgomery and Hunter Landry.

Zachary continues to enjoy a robust economy and an equally healthy surplus. Sales tax revenues and new construction starts remains high as our community grows. Unfortunately, the costs associated with operating local government increases daily and in this, Zachary is not alone. While rising operational costs cannot be ignored, the City has implemented methods aimed at overall cost reduction, while keeping a mindful eye on existing assets and resources. The City’s proactive approach assures the continuation of deliverable services that its citizens have come to expect and enjoy.

The City of Zachary’s continuing ‘economic development interests’ have realized success through partnering with the Zachary Chamber of Commerce. This partnership has already paid dividends while experiencing tremendous membership growth in the past year; and with Zachary’s having been recognized “as a viable contender” in an emerging economic market. New development and other speculative commercial interests are clearly on the City’s “futures” horizon.

However, in reporting these accomplishments I do so with caution. Zachary is not immune from the growing decline in the availability of state and federal support dollars. Traditional funding sources are becoming scarcer each day. The expectation that we be able to do more with less has become the new reality. Fortunately for Zachary, we are not dependent on federal or state government for our existence. By the same token, we will continue to compete for all the available funding that we are eligible for.

2.

That old axiom “if you’re not getting your share of funding, someone else is”, could not be truer in today’s world.

The passage of the recent EBR Parish-Wide Road Improvements: “*MovEBR*” Tax in early January should provide improvements to parish roads located in Zachary. They would include McHost Rd (Safety Improvements), and general improvements for Pride-Port Hudson, and Rollins Road (Turning Movements, Shoulders and Drainage), and McHugh Rd (Paving and Drainage Improvements from Groom Rd to Lower Zachary Rd). Total funds allocated for the proposed Zachary road projects is \$54M. This represents a thirty (30) year tax initiative for multi-year projects, involving numerous work sites. The City-Parish anticipates multiple projects under way simultaneously. A final construction time schedule remains under development at the time of this writing.

Congressman Garrett Graves continues his efforts toward completion of the long sought after Comite River Diversion Canal Project. LA DOTD (Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development) has been in the Zachary area for several months identifying and developing a plan for utility re-locations, bridge designs and surveys of possible crossing points along the pathway of the proposed diversion project.

Traffic and Drainage concerns remain a parish-wide concern, one only exacerbated further by the 2016 Flood Event. While the design and engineering process for named Zachary projects has begun, the successful completion of each, along with the intended relief each expects to provide remains years away.

As stated on many previous occasions, the City of Zachary continues to support and endorse “locally based sports programs” for every child wishing to participate. The Zachary Youth Park has become one of the City’s chief economic drivers in recent years. Vast site improvements are exceeded only by the unmatched management, care and oversight of the Park which have transformed a once costly operation into a “viable” income generator asset. Now a much sought-after Mecca for both state, regional and national championship baseball tournament play, the Zachary Youth Park’s future potential is significantly greater than was ever envisioned just a few short years ago.

Unfortunately, in recent weeks the Zachary area has suffered the news of the pending loss and/ or closure of three local industries. Despite the dire circumstances the local community remains fiscally sound, with its more immediate concern being the welfare and well-being of those impacted by these unforeseen events. As a testament to local support and concern, the industries making these decisions continue their attempts to relocate affected employees at their other worksites outside of Zachary. The generous outreach gesture by other, unrelated area industries nearby, has them extending their helpful reach in efforts to hire some of the displaced workers.

3.

I would conclude by encouraging all citizens to become more active in the affairs of local government, while assisting others where and when possible. We have much remaining to be done in Zachary! Get to know your respective/ or new Councilmember and attend Council and community meetings. Exercise your right to participate in the process of local government where your contribution is both welcome and appreciated.

Please join us as we continue the hard work required for assuring our City's future.

Sincerely,
David Amrhein