



MAYOR PENNY LUEBS

March 13, 2008

State of the City Address

It is my honor to present the 2008 State of the City Address. I want to thank the Chamber for the opportunity to speak today and give credit to those I have the privilege to serve and work with to make Clawson our city. I'd like to recognize my fellow council members, city manager, department heads and our city employees who keep our community moving forward every day. I would like to thank our school system for providing a wonderful education to the next generation. I would like to thank our businesses who have placed their trust in us. And I would like to thank our volunteers who comprise our city boards and commissions. We couldn't do what we're doing without a focused team effort and I thank you. Later, we will also honor two individuals who serve and have served this community in different ways. They are representative of what makes this city a great place – its people.

Today I share with you some of the City's accomplishments in the last year. We live in a remarkable city, 2 square miles with almost 13,000 people. I am pleased to report that the financial state of our city is in good shape. Our total budget of 7 million dollars includes a surplus of \$780,000.00.

Our city is growing. We all know that the geographic area of Clawson has not changed, but we have experienced an increase in retail developments. Growth can be a good thing, if we manage it well so that it sustains and enhances the quality of life for residents. Parking in the downtown area is a challenge. Another example of growth is our library. The library is quickly outgrowing their building with increased patronage and library transactions.

Like other cities in Michigan, we have aging roads, water mains and buildings that need renewal and investment. Construction was the highlight of summer 2007. 14 Mile Road was reconstructed from Crooks to Washington, with federal and state aid picking up about 90% of those costs. The City received a grant of \$1 million from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to fund an inspection of the City's sewer system. This assessment will help to develop a work plan for rehabilitation of our sewer system.

Many local streets, Marc, West Baker, Elmsford, Essex, Huntley, Gordon Court and Wilson were reconstructed, including new water and sewer systems, at a cost of \$4.5 million. Related projects included new water lines and intersection upgrades throughout the City. Passage of a 22 million dollar road millage in 2007 will allow continued road and sewer work on streets in 2008, along with road reconstruction of N. Main and additional on street parking north of 14 Mile Road. The Department of Public Works (DPW) has been responsible for overseeing these projects and continues to exceed expectations in maintaining city operations. We were able to purchase a Vactor Sewer Jet and a Chipper to continue on going maintenance in our city. We continue to explore cost savings through shared services with surrounding communities. One instance is the garbage disposal contract we entered into this July with member communities of SOCCRA. As a result we saw a savings in our garbage disposal contract.

We saw a \$25.00 a year tax for a sidewalk program that will allow us to replace sidewalks every ten years on a rotating basis. We saw an increase in water rates to assist in the rehabilitation of our water and sewer system.

Traffic lights were removed from 14 Mile Road, to the concern of residents south of 14 Mile Road. This remains a topic of council discussion, with an expected disposition to be determined in July of this year.

We've had changes in our downtown, beginning in July 07 with a pilot program that brought on-street parking to S. Main Street and a lowering of the speed limit to twenty five miles an hour through the downtown. These measures will help us with our goals – to attract new business with the addition of parking, and to calm traffic, making Clawson a go to pedestrian friendly destination rather than a drive through area. As a pilot parking program, we continue to monitor its effect and will be discussing this during a parking workshop on April 8th where we hope to gather additional feedback from residents and businesses on the parking project.

In city hall, we have taken advantage of new internet technologies, moving beyond simply publishing information on-line and beginning to interact on-line with the public we serve. In order to better preserve city records and plans we have started a program to digitize all records. A new LED sign has been installed in front of city hall with a programmable message board. We repaired and replaced two heating and cooling units along with new trim paint on the outside of the building. A committee of City employees and retirees, working with the City Manager, helped to make changes in our health insurance program

resulting in more than a \$350,000.00 in savings this year. Our health insurance cost is less than it was two years ago. This year we are exploring upgrading the City Hall Community Center. Clawson held its first Random Acts of Kindness Week in February of this year, and the Relay for Life is returning for a second year in May. Twin boys in Clawson won a National Art Contest held by PBS Kids and Barney Day in Clawson was proclaimed when the purple dinosaur presented a the grand prize to the winners.

The city and school have mutual interests and we are committed to working together. Mike Bosnic, the School Board President and I meet monthly, and we would welcome your input and presence at these breakfast meetings. The school board and city council may be able to collaborate on decisions that will result in benefits for both groups, beginning with the exploration of a land swap between the old McDonald school land and the land between Baker and the DPW building.

Our police and fire departments are meeting the demands of today. Our Interim Police Chief, Bruce Henderlight, retired and Chief Harry Anderson filled the position. A police liaison officer began work in the schools, and we saw a return of our police bike patrol in the summer. The Clawson police and fire department, along with the City of Troy, were the first to go live in Oakland County with the use of a new radio system which allows police, fire and first responders to communicate with each other during a critical incident. We were able to purchase two new police vehicles. The fire department joined a collaborate effort of Oakland County's Mutual Fire Aid Pact. The fire department continues their volunteerism with the Goodfellows. The fire station received new epoxy flooring

The parks and recreation department continues to offer programs for senior citizens, adults and children. A highlighted program is the well attended Fall Festival. We continue to receive a Tree City USA recognition for support of our forestry program. The Teen Center saw the hire of a new Director, Bev Owens, and an increase of teen attendance in their program. The Clawson Senior apartments were landscaped in the last year.

The historical museum saw the retirement of our first Museum Curator, and the beginning of a new era for our newly appointed Curator. 2007 resulted in the resignation of our Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Director, and the commitment of a local business owner who stepped up to chair the DDA.

We have a city government that is connected to the people we serve. I have learned that you can't be a leader if you don't learn to listen and respond to people, and just as importantly, people won't trust what we're doing here in the city if there is no understanding to their needs. We have a sluggish economy. More and more people are struggling financially, struggling to make their mortgage, wondering about health care costs or perhaps looking for employment. And people look to us for answers. I don't have all the answers, but I do share their concerns.

The message I want to promote is a positive image of Clawson, from our city services to our businesses, to our citizens and to our schools. The message I want to impart is that Clawson is a great place to live in and do business in. What are the challenges in 2008? Improved collaboration and communication between citizens, businesses, city staff, city committees and the schools. The second message is community involvement. Whether it is involvement in your child's school, in a club or civic group – be involved. Promoting activities for our youth to be involved in, whether at school or in the municipality, is an investment in our future. Another message is looking forward to alternate renewable energy. 24 states have adopted a renewable portfolio standard with a goal of 15% renewable energy by 2015. We can be a leader in renewable energy by adopting standards with an example of exploring energy efficient LED fixtures in our traffic lights and exploring other renewable energy sources for Clawson in our buildings. The agenda in 2008 is very full.

Franklin Roosevelt ended his first inaugural address with the words "in this dedication of a nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May he protect each and every one of us. May he guide me in the days to come". May he guide all of us as we work to better our community.