

The Honorable Victor Pereira, Mayor
City of Glenn Heights, Texas
Glenn Heights Chamber of Commerce
January 24, 2011

State of the City Address

In May of 2010, I was elected Mayor of Glenn Heights. The time period since the election has been an experience in the challenges of government, the advantages and benefits of engaging in partnerships, and confirmation of concerns that I had regarding the need for the city to improve the way it conducts and manages its business within our limited resources.

Historically, the strength of any organization rests in its ability to create partnerships and interests that are win-win solutions for all participants at the table. This also involves the ability to successfully leverage advantages for our community by networking with organizations that can help promote the interests of the city.

Some of our recent successes is our active involvement with organizations such as Best Southwest and the North Ellis County Coalition of Cities, both of which promote the interests of their respective member communities at the county, regional, state and federal levels of government --- securing us a seat at the table.

Our efforts have also involved promoting a sense of community pride to overcome what some would characterize as the indifference that sometimes overshadows our community. Our recent activities in this area have included:

- Town Hall Meetings and last year's successful HOA Summit.
- Our award-winning Keep Glenn Heights Beautiful program.
- The informative Arbor Day events with local schools.
- The successful Fall Family Festival.
- The Mayor's First Annual Essay Contest in recognition of African-American History Month. We need to continue our efforts implementing events that recognize diversity in the community.

- On-going efforts to revitalize the Glenn Heights Chamber of Commerce.

These are positive steps in the right direction.

The Glenn Heights City Council and City Administration have also been engaged in an on-going process to establish priorities. Some of our recent efforts have included:

- A five year Strategic Plan and a Mission Statement that provides a template of goals and objectives.
- Best Management Practices and involvement with the Government Finance Officers Association in matters related to city finances.
- Code of Conduct & Protocol that streamlines and improves the manner in which City Council meetings are conducted.
- And an increased focus on Risk Management with an eye toward reduction of property and liability claims.

We have also worked to create initiatives that enhance infrastructure improvements and the level of services for local residents, along with providing advantages that will better enable our community to compete for development opportunities. Some of these recent initiatives included adoption of the following plans:

- Emergency Management Plan.
- Code Enforcement Plan designed to enhance neighborhood vitality, beautify major thoroughfares and the I-35 frontage corridor.
- Economic Development Plan that provides a framework to stimulate growth and enhance the city's commercial tax base.
- Hampton Road & Bear Creek Road Project that will enhance and jump-start future growth opportunities.

We've also been engaged in a process with a citizen's advisory board and consultant group over the past year in an effort to update the Comprehensive Plan and identify appropriate and compatible land uses throughout the city. This has been a very useful process and I'm sensitive to the fact that the public discussion related to growth and planning issues in the community has sometimes been controversial. My view of this issue does not include the

notion that land use planning is a game of winners or losers. Rather, both are compatible within the scope of promoting development with a diverse and proper balance of uses.

The challenges we face are massive and progress is often incremental. But I can assure everyone that the City Council and City Administration have heard the demands from our citizens to grow Glenn Heights into a financially responsible city with a distinctive identity and sustainable infrastructure.

All of this necessarily requires continuous relationship-building and partnerships between city officials and parties of interest. More importantly, it requires attentiveness to cooperation within the City of Glenn Heights organizational structure as we strive to be the best that we can be. The partnership among colleagues on city council and city staff is vital to any measure of success that we achieve.

For those among our citizenry who are not that familiar with how our local system of government is structured, the City of Glenn Heights functions under a city manager form of government. The city manager is an appointed full-time employee who handles the day-to-day operation of the city. The city manager serves at the pleasure of an elected mayor and city council, which provides direction and establishes policy.

Within this context, it is my role as Mayor of Glenn Heights to help shape a vision and consensus among my colleagues on city council regarding financial matters, as well as future development and infrastructure needs that can be clearly communicated to, and effectively implemented by, city staff. This is not a game of winners and losers, but rather a process of promoting orderly policies of financially sustainable priorities and practices.

As I stated prior to my election, the Mayor and City Council serve as managers of a portfolio that consists of twelve thousand citizens. As elected officials we have a God-given duty and responsibility to be good stewards over the city's portfolio.

I am committed to absolute transparency in all areas of city government and a budget process that helps citizens understand the predicaments and decisions that confront and conflict the community. A process that also enables the Glenn Heights Mayor and City Council to make informed and educated voting decisions on timely issues that impact taxes, spending, capital projects, fixing roads, compensating employees --- or growing the city organization.

Within this context, an analysis was recently performed of all City major funds from 2002 through 2010. This analysis revealed that:

- In 2002 our General Fund Budget revenues and expenditures were \$5,565,756.00 and \$5,308,301.00, respectively.
- In the eight intervening years from 2002 through 2010 our General Fund Budget revenues increased to \$10,126,820.00 with expenditures of \$10,546,907.00, respectively.
- Salaries have also increased over this time period by ninety-eight percent (98%) from \$1,479,114.00 to \$2,929,319.00 even though our sales tax revenues have only increased \$200,000.00 from \$ 113,000.00 to \$312,000.00, respectively.

We cannot spend more than we are taking in and still maintain financial sustainability.

In regards to the portfolio that I previously mentioned, about two years ago the condition of the city's finances and tax base were priority issues requiring immediate attention. City Council agreed to focus on economic development as a means to strengthen our tax base and offset declining finances. We must remain on the same path.

I am concerned about the state of the city's water and sewer fund and about our ability to provide low-cost efficient services. Likewise, I will be focused upon future bond issues for capital projects that are financially sensible and provide tangible results for our citizens. We are not Midlothian, Desoto, Duncanville or Cedar Hill. The level of wealth and demographics are much different in Glenn Heights.

Overall, 2010 shaped up to be a productive year for the City of Glenn Heights. We experienced several new business start-ups in the community and experienced growth in new residential housing starts. We also experienced a reduction in the overall crime rate in all categories.

I think that everyone would agree there's no shortage of challenges facing the City of Glenn Heights. Fixing local roads comes readily to mind. The list is long and our ability to meet some of these challenges is often difficult, especially in today's tough economic times. Other challenges will prove less overwhelming.

I will be working to build more of a consensus with my colleagues on City Council with a focus on budget issues that are looming on the horizon for FY 2011-12. In the end analysis, good government does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is a collective effort and partnership between those who are elected and those who elected them to office.

In closing, *the city council and I will continue to remain focused on delivery of the services and amenities that are beneficial to our citizens such as*

- *Improvements to streets,*
- *Fair and consistent public safety,*
- *Diversified economic development, and*
- *Partnerships that expand community services, especially for youth, seniors and the disabled.*

Let's take a moment to revisit the principles of our Mission Statement & Strategic Plan:

The City of Glenn Heights Mission Statement recognizes and is committed to a mission of serving the public interest, advancing the quality of life for all citizens, and preserving our small town atmosphere by embracing diversity and family values.

The City of Glenn Heights' Strategic Plan is guided by our mission and our core values. Both our mission and our vision are founded on the following basic values that guide all of our actions and reflect what to expect from our elected officials and employees:

Transparent, Open & Honest Government. This value reflects our first and most important responsibility and should be the hallmark of all our efforts. Our competence is measured and, in fact, reinforced through active engagement of those we serve. We must strive to maintain an organizational reputation for openness, honesty, and integrity. If we say it, publish it, and verbally promote it --- then we must act upon it --- or otherwise it just becomes another passive document.

Thank You & God Bless You.