

State of the City Address
January 28, 2010

Thank you Dan for the gracious introduction.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, local and state officials, honored guests and friends. I am humbled to stand before you today and present our first State of the City Address.

First, I would like to thank my wife and my family for their unwavering love and support over the past year and a half. Without them, I would not be standing here today, speaking to you as the first Mayor of Dunwoody. I would ask that you encourage them not to abandon me during my tenure, I'm afraid quality time with dad has been as rare as spotting a koala bear on Mt Vernon.

Second, thank you to our City Council. This first year has been one of determination, growth and learning - from the 2am "pre-swearing in" meeting on my screen in porch, to the evening on December 1st when we cut the ribbon ushering in a new era for the citizens of Dunwoody, to the roll out of the Dunwoody Police Department on April 1st, to the close of our first year of service barely a month ago.

You took on the challenges and tribulations of leading a new city unwavering and head on: pushing the personal envelope: never ending emails, meetings, painfully long council meetings, burning the midnight oil, and personal hardships, all the while maintaining your lives, families and in many cases, full time careers.

By now each of us knows all too well Public Service is grueling, and without the dedication and vision of council members Denis Shortal, Adrian Bonser, John Heneghan, Danny Ross, Tom Taylor, and Robert Wittenstein, we may not be calling our area the City of Dunwoody. This team is certainly a 2nd family. They all have my unwavering respect and admiration... Thank you.

Tonight, I also want to offer a special note of appreciation to my Executive Staff and all City employees. Please stand... Very few outside of City Hall really understand the difficult environment you all thrive in on a daily basis. I do, and I appreciate each one of you more than you know. Thank you.

Finally, I must thank the citizens of this great City... From incorporation efforts first borne in 1971, culminating on July 15, 2008, thousands of future Dunwoody residents made the choice to vote YES for the formation of a new city.

From there, in a special election, from a field of 16 candidates, you voted in six inaugural city council members and me as Mayor, and the City of Dunwoody took hold.

You certainly didn't stop at the vote. The great volunteer spirit of Dunwoody has not slowed down one iota, we have dozens of boards and committees whose volunteer members spent countless

volunteer hours for the betterment of this city. If you are one of these citizens who serves on a board or committee, please stand. Thank you all.

We are in a time of new beginnings, growth, and promise for the City of Dunwoody. We are entering into not only a new year, our second year as a city, but a new decade, and an exciting time of self-determination and direction for our community.

As we look to our future we must reflect on the past 14 months, to celebrate our accomplishments and highlight where we confronted our challenges.

2009 was not an easy year for many individuals and families. We faced many challenges including a struggling U.S economy, war, nationwide unemployment reaching an unprecedented “reported” 10%, in addition to the challenges faced as a fledgling city.

But, through it all, we have accomplished much in our short time as a city, creating, implementing, and executing a foundation of success.

Following the elections, we held our first council meeting on October 1st. From there, during the beginning of November, our first City Manager, Warren Hutmacher, joined our City, from our neighbor the City of Norcross. Warren joined the city with 11 years of government experience and a Masters degree in Public Administration from Ohio State University. He has been an invaluable and integral member of our Dunwoody family.

On Monday, December 1, 2008, the City of Dunwoody opened its doors and began operation. On that first day, we hit the ground running, voting on a 37 item agenda, and we haven’t stopped moving since.

Within the first 31 days of our existence, we hired, from over 100 applicants, Chief Billy Grogan, to lead our new police force. Chief Grogan came from the City of Marietta with almost 30 years of experience, a Masters degree in Public Administration, and as a graduate of the FBI National Academy.

Chief Grogan was not the only person to join our City of Dunwoody family at that time. By the middle of January Ms. Sharon Lowery was appointed as our City Clerk and we had a fully functional Community Development Department, a Public Works Department, and a Finance and Administration Department. On February 25, we held the City’s first Municipal Court session. Ms. Tiffany Pete, who leads our court, has a Masters degree in Public Administration and was recently recognized as a Certified Court Executive by the United States Supreme Court.

Each of these departments has strived to reach milestones and to exceed the expectations set forth by our residents. Because, when the residents of Dunwoody made the choice to form their own city government, we as elected officials, appointed officials, and city employees made a promise.

“To make Dunwoody a better community, built on mutual respect and trust, and to promote and maintain the highest standards of personal and professional conduct by all involved in City government.”

Let me give you a few examples of the hard work and dedication put forth by our City’s department.

As the first police chief for the City of Dunwoody Police Department Chief Grogan was given a task, considered impossible by many, to build, from scratch, a police force responsible for the service and protection of all Dunwoody residents, visitors and businesses. And to do it in the short time of three months.

On March 31 40 officers and 8 civilians were sworn into service and at 12:01 a.m. on April 1, no April Fools joke, the officers took to the streets with sirens wailing and lights flashing. I know most of you share my sense of pride every time we see our officers on the street. It is a joy that will never go stale.

Since then, our first rate police force has made 1,262 arrests, written 6,300 citations, and made the city of Dunwoody one of the safest cities in the State of Georgia.

Our officers even take notice of those who would otherwise be ignored and pushed aside. I have a short note here that I would like to read, originally written to Chief Grogan from one of our fine Sargeants, about two of our officers.

Chief,

I wanted to let you know about an incident that Officer Sommo and Officer Hasseltine handled at the Crown Plaza on Sunday night January 3rd. We received a call in reference to a disoriented man at the Plaza. The man was homeless, having no money, and no place to go, not to mention the freezing temperatures. Officer Sommo and Hasseltine took it upon themselves to help him out.

Rather than run him off or arrest him Officers Sommo and Hasseltine bought him dinner and gave him enough money for transportation to a shelter in Atlanta to get him out of the cold for the night. This act of kindness is just another great example of the many good deeds, many gone unrecognized, by the men and woman of the Dunwoody Police Department.

I would like to commend Officer Sommo and Hasseltine for going above and beyond their duty to help out someone in their time of need.

I don’t know if Officer Sommo and Hasseltine are here this evening, but I would also like to publicly thank them for their generosity and consideration of this man and his wellbeing. Thank you gentleman.

Turning to another of our departments, in 2009, Community Development coordinated a series of community discussions for our first Comprehensive Plan for the City, a guide that will detail the community's vision and goals for the future.

They have been intimately involved with our Sustainability Commission, whose list of accomplishments include creation of the Dunwoody Community Garden. 20% of all the food grown this past year in the garden was donated to a local food pantry which has helped to provide meals to local families in need.

I don't know what they put in the soil, but it only took them 6 weeks to start donating fresh produce...their thumbs are definitely greener than mine... As I understand, a community beer and wine garden initiative may not be too far behind.

Our Public Works Department has been busy too. This past fall, a truck specially equipped with high tech lasers, scanned Dunwoody roads giving us a detailed look at existing problems and areas that may become an issue in the future. This study will allow us to improve Dunwoody roadways in a more timely manner, creating a safer driving environment for everyone.

Public Works partnered with the Dunwoody Homeowners Association to implement an Adopt-A-Spot program. They repaired over 375 potholes and worked with the Perimeter Community Improvement Districts to upgrade 4 intersections on Ashford- Dunwoody Road including new sidewalks, upgraded traffic signals, and responded to over 100 emergency calls.

There is a letter I would like to share with you, written to the Crier about one of the hard working members on the Public Works road crew who went above and beyond the call of duty when responding to the needs our residents.

Sometime we get it right and you guys let us know about it...an example is this letter the Crier received from Ms. Mary Schultz:

-Dear Cathy,

I wanted to write and publicly thank the City of Dunwoody Department of Public Works. I called and spoke with the manager, Chuck, this morning because there was a 6-8 week old kitten that had fallen into the storm drain on my cul-de-sac. Chuck sent Joe and his crew (a nice young man) over to look into the situation. It had started raining, but this did not deter them from climbing into the drain to try and retrieve the kitten. Unfortunately, they could not reach the kitten, but they told me if I could hear it come back closer to the drain entrance, to please call them back.

Several hours went by and my neighbor and I went back over to the drain to check and see if the kitten was still alive. We heard it crying loudly so I called Chuck's office again and I spoke with Jada and I asked if Chuck could please send Joe's crew back over. The two arrived in the pouring rain and Joe's assistant (sorry I don't know his name) pulled up the trap which my neighbor had lowered into the storm drain the night before and low and behold the kitten was clinging to the cage for dear life. I immediately wrapped the soaked, shivering little kitty in a towel and took it to Dr. Cecil

Johnson's office at the Dunwoody Animal Hospital. I am happy to report the kitten is in good health with no lasting effects from its ordeal and my neighbor decided to adopt her.

I can't thank them enough for saving this one small life.

As Gandhi said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Chuck and his people in the Public Works Department showed me the greatness of our City of Dunwoody.

I can't stress enough the importance of creating and sustaining a city government that really listens and cares for the people it serves, both two legged and four.

The City's Finance and Administration Department has also been busy this past year creating an entire finance system for the City. We are blessed with the enormous talents and expertise of our finance director, Chris Pike.

This department includes much more than just Finances, it also houses IT, Human Resources, Purchasing, Marketing, and the Taxes & Licensing Departments.

IT continues to be the driving force behind Dunwoody's ability to successfully communicate. From the design and deployment of 38 mobile data terminals for the City's police department to the creation of the entire technology infrastructure for the city, IT has enabled our departments to seamlessly share information. Our dynamic and interactive city website gives you access to our services from placing a work order to following us on Twitter and Facebook...

Human Resources assisted with the hiring of the Police Department (48 employees) in only 3 months. They created an employee handbook and created and implemented a competitive benefits program. In anticipation of our recent flu season, they organized a flu clinic for all employees and their family members to receive the regular flu and H1N1 vaccines.

And finally, not to be overlooked, our Municipal Court has been busy since it began service at its new location this past June, holding court twice a week; they have processed over 7000 citations. The court offers translation for multiple languages, has four part-time municipal court judges, and two part-time solicitors.

So here we are. One year later. It was said (over and over and over) that it couldn't be done. The naysayers never thought we would ever make it this far.

Well I am proud to stand up here today and say we did it. By virtually every measurement we have been successful. We are, as a community, despite the greatest recession in a generation, better off than we were a year ago. We are a proud, determined, resilient community. We are the City of Dunwoody!

It is easy to look back on 2009 and think the tough part is over. In some ways it is, in many ways it is not. It is the road ahead, 2010 and beyond, that will bring us constant challenges and triumphs.

If we approach each day as a fresh slate, a new beginning, we will continue to excel, to thrive, to surmount any obstacle that comes our way.

As we move into 2010 we will continue to build on the foundation painstakingly poured by so many this past year.

This year will bring about the completion of our inaugural Comprehensive Plan and work on a Master Redevelopment Plan for the Dunwoody Village and Georgetown/North Shallowford areas.

These documents will create a quality foundation that will guide all future development for the City, the Village, and Georgetown/North Shallowford areas.

They will aid the city in preserving our historic treasures, promoting our economic vitality and protecting Dunwoody's many picturesque neighborhoods.

With the aid of these documents and the detailed reports created by our Public Works Department, one of our most important initiatives for 2010 is the continued maintenance and the re-pavement of Dunwoody's roadways. We have heard the concerns of the citizens and have identified the areas most in need. So in the next few months, be prepared to start seeing work crews around the City filling pot holes and working to make sure driving around our beautiful city is a pleasant experience for everyone.

Traffic flow and mitigation is a priority this year and will be for years to come. I can tell you what will not happen on this councils watch, road widenings. We share the belief that "if you build it", "they will come". The Fiscal Year 2010 budget includes funding for a Master transportation plan that will include plans for traffic congestion mitigation, a stand alone bicycle plan and pedestrian improvements. The City has also funded engineering plans for intersection improvements at North Peachtree Road at Tilly Mill Road as well as Mt. Vernon Road at Vermack Road.

We will continue to work towards the acquisition and development of parks and public green space within the City. Part of the process of protecting our common space, neighborhoods, shopping, and dining areas is to make a commitment to the protection of our environment and natural resources...

We worked throughout 2009 towards the designation of a "Green Community" as part of the Atlanta Regional Commission program for environmental sustainability. We are well on our way with 105 points towards the first level of certification. In 2010, to gain the last 70 points, we are going to focus on initiatives we can bring to the community.

Encouraging the use of more efficient outdoor lighting, implementing sustainable building policies, working to create and adopt a city-wide green space plan, and working towards a zero waste zone initiative.

It is our responsibility for now, and for future generations. Together we can create a more sustainable Dunwoody.

We all know Dunwoody is a great place to live, work, start a business, operate a business, and otherwise enjoy a fruitful and enjoyable life.

People choose to live in Dunwoody because it provides an excellent way of life as well as first rate schools, driven by significant parental involvement and nonstop citizen involvement

We will work in 2010 to bring more businesses to Dunwoody. We know there are many empty office spaces, many signs in windows.

By encouraging new business and growth of those already here, we secure the future of the City and the livelihood of our community. There will be a concentrated multi-faceted approach to get the word out... Dunwoody is the place to be.

As we look to the future that 2010 holds, our city must be a place in which each resident has the opportunity to prosper and thrive...

It would be an enormous mistake to use these tough times as a reason to retrench, to do less. No... doing less is not an option. We are not a community of doing less. We must continue to be bold.

We didn't grow from a tiny group of settlers just down from the Chattahoochee River because we were timid or intimidated.

That's the way it's always been in Dunwoody, and why our continued strength and determination will ensure Dunwoody will always be, a city of resilience, a City of new beginnings.

Many things we do and discuss are not instant gratification, but things whose fruits will be borne for future generations.

The City of Dunwoody and this council, will not be divided by "district", but united as one community, for one community, ... The City of Dunwoody.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege to speak to you this evening, to be a neighbor, to serve as your Mayor and to be part of this new beginning for the City of Dunwoody.