

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Mayor Doug Sprouse

March 9th, 2010

Let me begin by saying what a privilege it has been this past year to work together with this Council in order to serve the citizens of Springdale. I want to thank each of you for your willingness to help guide and support the city administration and city employees as we work to move Springdale forward. You continue to help us prepare for an exciting future even during a very challenging time in this nation's economy. I want to briefly recap just a few accomplishments that our city has achieved before I turn to the opportunities that lie ahead.

Working together, we've dealt with very difficult budget issues head-on. We made almost \$2 million dollars in budget adjustments during the first half of 2009. About \$1.5 million of those adjustments were effectively budget cuts. Beyond that, because of the outstanding stewardship of taxpayer dollars by our department heads and employees, we added over \$1.5 million back into our reserves during 2009. Keep in mind, all this during a year that many believe to be one of the worst economically in our nation's recent history. New business license numbers also seem to be holding up very well in Springdale. Concerning our sales tax numbers, so far this year after the first two months of 2010, our receipts are up about \$77,000 over budget projections. While we're not ready to jump up and down and have a party, it is nice to see those numbers heading in the right direction.

I've also been very encouraged by the increasing number of positive comments our city is receiving, not only from our own residents, but from outside our city as well. Not a week goes by that someone does not mention to me how overall attitudes in the city are continuing to improve. Please don't misunderstand. I'm not trying to take any of the credit for this positive change. I'm just glad it's happening. By way of example, this would probably be a good time to stop and thank everyone involved in Merry Christmas Springdale, an event that took place last December. Many individuals and businesses, along with the music ministry of First Baptist Church worked together to create an event designed to simply say "thank you" to our city employees. It was a great success. I hope that other businesses, churches, and various groups will be able to come together and make this an annual event for our employees. It was greatly appreciated and a much needed "atta boy" for some real servants who might not hear thank you as often as they should. Will we continue to face challenges? Certainly. We know the next couple of years will still be tight financially. But a positive vision and attitude will be essential as we continue to get ready for what will no doubt be an exciting future for Springdale.

In working toward that future, I'll be traveling with the Chamber to Washington D.C. next month to meet with area legislators on matters of concern for our city and region. We'll be giving them updates on various infrastructure projects as well as sharing some concerns with possible EPA regulations in our watershed. I'll be traveling again in May to the ICSC in Las Vegas. While last year was our first time, and we had some productive meetings, I believe this year will be even better. We'll have more meetings set up and more opportunities to sell Springdale to retailers from around the world. I'm appreciative of the work the Chamber of Commerce continues to do even during times when businesses across the nation

aren't expanding. The fact is most are just holding on until many of the uncertainties out there have passed. I know it's tough all over, but the best thing we can do is to continue to support local businesses whenever possible.

Now let me move on to just some of the positive changes that will take place during this year. First, let's talk about infrastructure:

- Wagon Wheel road, our northern corridor, will be completed this spring. It's behind schedule, but the fact is, you just can't lay concrete when the weather won't cooperate-and we've had some pretty rough weather this winter. Thankfully, some decisions were made last year allowing the first two lanes to be opened up to traffic. As a result, our folks have avoided having to drive on temporary portions of road all winter.
- We'll be holding public meetings in about a month concerning the interchange at I-540 and the Don Tyson Parkway. If it could be built next week that still wouldn't be soon enough. But in reality, the project is moving forward on schedule and actually ahead of schedule in some areas.
- The firm date is not yet set, but very soon public meetings will be held on the Johnson Road improvements. This federal project will help with a much needed and improved connection to I-540 for much of our city. We've also received word from the Highway Department that the Johnson interchange, as well as the Wagon Wheel Road interchange will be designated as Springdale exits when the new signage is installed soon along I-540.
- We've just developed and received Highway Department approval for a plan that will improve traffic flow at Elm Springs Road and I-540. We know with Macadoodles opening soon and other development that we believe will be occurring in that area we need at least some minimal improvements that will move more cars. That plan is moving forward as I speak.
- We continue to communicate with the Highway Department about future improvements to Hwy 265 all the way north to Rogers.
- While the northern 412 bypass is still years away, some right of way is now being purchased.
- There's another part of infrastructure that I want to touch on; our trail system. You're going to see a renewed emphasis on trails beginning this year. Trails are an amenity that Springdale needs in order to attract the quality commercial and residential development that will benefit all of our citizens. There are organizations and money available to help us make an extensive trail system in Springdale a reality. We will find ways to begin to access those resources. We need to begin with areas of trails that will be most visible and most used by our residents, like trails in the south that will connect with those around Lake Fayetteville and then on to Fayetteville's system. On the west, we need to connect from Johnson north to Tyson Park and then to the new area around Arvest Ballpark. Another priority area would begin downtown, and then connect to other parts of the city, like JB Hunt Park and Springdale Lake. The bottom line is that we're going to get off of high-center and begin to move the needle on trails.

Now, about some other positives we'll begin to see take shape during 2010:

- Northwest Regional Medical Center Expansion. I'll not go into great detail here, but the possibilities are very exciting for Springdale-particularly the Downtown District. A \$10 million + expansion and remodel are being planned for the hospital. Along with the expansion, we may be looking at a future need for the creation of a medical district, bringing with it all sorts of opportunities to direct people to the downtown area. When people come back downtown, so will the opportunity for commercial development. This expansion, along with the soon to be completed renovation and expansion at Springdale High help set the stage for some real possibilities for improvements downtown.
- Concerning the area west of I-540 around the ballpark. Things are moving forward as they need to. The city is engaged with the property owners so that we are not holding things up when the economy improves and additional development begins to materialize. I'm thankful that as market forces drive that development, it will be done right, and will be an area that Springdale will be proud of. I believe that over the next 5-20 years, that area will be the most desired location for quality development in our region. All that said, Springdale has opportunities for development throughout our city. And while city government's role is not to risk taxpayer money on private development, we must support quality development regardless of where it occurs within our city limits. We need to be open to helping with infrastructure needs when we see substantial returns on our investment. If it's good for any part of Springdale, it's good for all of Springdale.
- The Miracle League Fields. With your support along with the support of many generous people in Springdale, approximately \$680,000 worth of facilities for the Miracle League will become a reality this year. Because of the outpouring of support from our people, we expect to see two baseball fields completed in time for league play to begin this fall. Parents and families of special needs children and adults will travel to Springdale from miles around so they can have an opportunity to participate. There will be ample opportunities for volunteers to help with the league. If nothing else, come and be a buddy to one of the players on the field, so their families can do something they hardly ever get to do- just watch and enjoy. I think the support of this project by the people of Springdale says more about who we are than almost anything else we could do. Projects like this speak directly to quality of life in Springdale and will pay great dividends to our city for years to come.

On a somewhat related note, let me remind you that for the second year in a row, Springdale was named by Business Week Magazine as the best place in Arkansas to raise a family. Obviously, there are many reasons Springdale would receive such recognition. Certainly the quality of the Springdale School District, along with places like Shiloh Museum, the Springdale Public Library, The Jones Center, The Arts Center of the Ozarks, the Rodeo of the Ozarks, Arvest Ballpark, the Springdale Youth Center and Springdale Aquatic Center, Tyson Sports Complex, our many well-kept parks. It should go without saying the importance of the great work that our Police, Fire, and Public Works Departments do daily to keep people safe in our community. If people don't feel safe, nothing else you do really matters. I shouldn't have gotten started because I know I'll leave somebody out. We also have an outstanding

Senior Center. And just last Saturday we had a groundbreaking for our first Community Garden. I'm sure as we build on that success more locations will follow. When talking about the great family atmosphere in Springdale, it certainly could never be what it is without the positive influence provided by the many churches and volunteer organizations we have.

- Another thing we're interested in, is finding a location for a dog park in Springdale. We can probably come up with the place, if some citizens are interested in building the support and funds to help make it happen. Speaking of dogs, over the next several weeks we'll be developing much needed changes in our animal and pet ordinances. While there are bound to be some touchy issues, I want to thank you for your support and willingness to tackle this as we work with our citizens to make Springdale better and safer when it comes to responsible pet ownership.
- Beginning in the next few months, all the residents of Springdale will be able to participate in curbside recycling along with their trash service at a rate that is well below that of the major cities in our area offering the same services. Along with that agreement, as a result of negotiations between Waste Management and Springdale Water Utilities, the agreement you recently approved also protects the citizens of Springdale against the very real possibility of substantial sewer rate increases over the next few years. This agreement hopefully buys us enough time to see a regional solution for sludge disposal, thereby avoiding the need for more costly options in the future.
- Something else we're excited about is our new Emergency Notification System. It's almost ready to roll out to our citizens. Very soon we'll begin putting out the information to our folks instructing them on how they can customize the system the way they want it. It will be very versatile and a great enhancement to public safety and information for our people.
- **Also in the near future, our citizens should be able to access more city services on line for their convenience.** Things like signing your kids up for Youth Center Football, or swimming lessons. And other areas like reporting code violations or scheduling or checking status on building inspections. How about applying for business licenses on line? Our citizens can now watch streaming video of our City Council meetings from the city's website. Other city meetings will soon be available to watch also. Our IT department is working hard to make such improvements whenever possible. I recently established a Technology Advisory Board to help be a sounding board for our IT Department and to help guide us in those areas. Jesse Core is a part of that board along with some other individuals that are experts in technology from the private sector. They are volunteering their time and abilities to help us ask the right questions and make sure that what we do with technology makes sense for us.
- Let me encourage all of our citizens to consider participation on some of the many commissions and boards that exist throughout our city. If you have an interest, call my office and let me know so you can be considered when an opening occurs. If you need a list of existing commissions or boards and when terms expire, my office can help with that information as well. I believe the city website will also contain much of that information.

- Mark your calendars for May 6th. That will be the date for our Mayor's Prayer Breakfast. This will be the first time we've had one of these events in Springdale. It will be held in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer. It will be held at the Springdale Holiday Inn. Many area churches and businesses will be involved and everyone is welcome. It is a time that will focus on recognizing the importance of praying for our nation, state and city, along with our leaders and citizens. This will become an annual event in Springdale. There's already a lot of excitement about it and I know it will be a great success. More information will be available in the coming weeks.
- Probably the single most important thing going on in our city this year is the Census. The official date for the 2010 Census is April 1st. It is very important that everyone living in Springdale be counted. Each year, every hard working taxpayer in our city sends dollars away in the form of state and federal taxes. The amount of that money that comes back to Springdale through various funding streams is determined in large part by our population. That funding for the next 10 years will be determined by this count. That's why it's so important that every resident participate. It's the best way to get a portion of our tax money back into our own community. What doesn't come back here will just go somewhere else. The information gathered by the census bureau by law cannot be shared with any other agency. There's also the real possibility that Springdale will gain more representation in Little Rock as a result of the significant growth that has occurred. That will certainly help us on the issues that we believe are important to Northwest Arkansas. Please be counted.

Well, I've gone on much longer than I intended. I still didn't touch on everything I wanted to. But I need to wrap it up. I want to again thank this Council. Whether we've always agreed on every issue or not, I truly believe each of you have worked hard to make decisions that you believe are best for our city. I hope you feel the same way toward me. We can legitimately question each others' stance on issues without calling into question one's motives. I think we've succeeded in working together very well this past year and I fully expect that to continue. I believe such respect and cooperation encourages our citizens and is a big reason we hear about improved attitudes throughout our city.

I've got to thank our city staff- from everyone in my office to each department head and on to each employee that so wonderfully represents this city.

I must thank my friends. Your support and prayers for me mean more than I could ever express. Thank you for allowing me to still be myself-that's a big deal.

I've got to thank my family. When I think of Sandy and the kids, our parents and the rest of our family, thank you doesn't seem like enough, but right now I don't know of a better way to say it.

Finally, I want to thank God for blessing my life and blessing this city. Anything good in my life is completely undeserved. When and why God blesses us has nothing to do with us. It has everything to do with His purpose. All I know to do is to be thankful and recognize that God wants to use you and me to bless others. I just want to encourage you to count the many blessings of God on your life. It doesn't matter what you're going through, you have reason to be thankful and so does your city. I'll close with

the words of Solomon found in Proverbs 11: 1, “A city is lifted up by the blessing of the upright. It is torn down by the tongue of the wicked.” Let’s encourage one another as we make the most of God’s blessings for the sake of Springdale’s future.

Goodnight.