

## **State of the City 2009 – Mayor Peter B. Lewis**

### **As delivered January 12, 2009 at Emerald Downs for the Auburn Area Chamber of Commerce January membership luncheon**

In January of 2004 I started off my state of the city speech with these statements.

The economic outlook is still guarded.

There are attacks on the city's income from all sides.

We just lost one of the few remaining sources of funds for local street repairs and our streets are overflowing with commuter traffic from outside our city.

There is an unending stream of unfunded mandates descending upon us like rain from the sky.

Folks, things are looking up!

Then I went on to say that there are few times in the life of a city when everything goes just right. We will have emergencies. We will continue to have financial crisis after crisis and we will continue to be mandated and regulated by those at higher levels of government.

We will plan for the worst and work for the best. We do what we must with what we have to the best of our abilities and the City of Auburn has done an outstanding job of doing that last year and we will continue that work this year.

These are the times when the corporations of the new tomorrow, the millionaires of the next generation are created. These are the times when men and women sitting at their dining room table or working in their garage decide it's time to take a chance.

These are the times when companies, some small, others larger, re-structure their business, review their futures and strike off in new directions with a stronger discipline and a specific destination in mind.

It is not the job of government to build that corporation, design that new process. It is our job to get out of your way and do all that we can to help make you successful.

We began 2008 with the highest of expectations and ended it with the direst of predictions. By June of last year we were concerned that with the forecasted losses in income we were projecting we would have to use reserves to balance our budget. We took necessary measures and by June we had dropped spending, froze employment and re-evaluated programs and projects.

In fact, as dire as our predictions were at that time the reality was to be worse.

Sales tax dropped dramatically. On top of that on July 1st, 2008 Streamline Sales Tax, the biggest change in state sales tax laws in generations, went into effect. All the sales tax we used to receive from our huge concentration of industrial, manufacturing and distribution businesses stopped, forever.

More than two hundred thousand dollars a month, well more than two million dollars a year of tax money is gone, forever.

The state has a mitigation plan to give some monies back to us as one of the so-called 'loser' cities.

Our first mitigation check was received six months after we stopped receiving the monthly sales taxes from industrial, manufacturing and distribution sector.

That partial reimbursement is vital to our continuing government services, especially for that industrial sector.

There is no certainty that the mitigation payments will continue and we have already been told that the promised payments are on the state government financial list of items to be cut to balance their budget.

But with all those losses in mind your Council took up the challenge and we ended with a positive budget – again. As we have been saying with our road projects On Time! In Budget! is our password and we will be the Good Steward's of our citizen's money in this time of financial difficulty. The 2008 budget was effectively cut by a decision on my part –

just don't spend the money. Council approved the 2009-2010 budgets with further budget cuts in each year.

We are committed to working within our budget constraints. We will continue to look for every opportunity to maximize the people's dollar while being careful to meet the true needs of our citizens – within the budget.

We tightened that budget down for the remainder of 2008 and then we tightened it again for 2009 and yet again in 2010.

There is much we have to do and we need to find even smarter ways to do it.

First, government. Now we are a small city, a blue collar town that cannot afford to indulge in party politics at cost to our citizens. We believe the core mission should be reducing the size and cost of the government. Now I'm not talking philosophy but real life.

What I mean is that instead of building ever larger empires of personnel in the good times we should use this troubled time to create a system to leverage technology to reduce the human and financial resources necessary to manage our government.

We want to objectively measure the effectiveness of all government programs, end those that do not meet the needs of our citizens and direct resources to those that do.

Now, outside our city limits we have known for generations that there was little help on the way and if there was little of it would get to us.

Only in the last few years and specifically because of the members of your city council that made a positive decision to join with me and participate as individuals and as a Council at every level of government have we gotten anything.

By their efforts and at great personal cost in their part time role in government they are making a difference. They are spending an incredible number of hours in these supposedly part time council positions. They have spent time and hours that are priceless to our community. They have been to every table, every county, regional, state and federal board and commission important to us to make sure Auburn is heard and at long last recognized and some of those needs are finally being met.

I am proud to be associated with those council members willing to do the work to improve the fortunes of their community and I stand beside them in their work.

The big news today is the federal stimulus package.

As far as the stimulus package I have been a part of the process through U.S. Mayors working with President Elect Obama's advisors to begin infrastructure projects, like road, water and sewer maintenance projects, bridge and overpass repair and others. That stimulus package is only for projects that are deemed 'ready to go' and could start work in ninety days. Auburn submitted a package of over a hundred and thirty six million dollars that would create over twenty four hundred jobs and meets the criteria.

The National League of Cities has a stimulus package identified by our council members that attend NLC and they worked with me to submit that same list of projects ready to go within ninety days to that organization.

The governors of the state turned in their own package stating the stimulus money should go to the states for projects that could begin within about 120 days and funnel down to the cities after state projects are completed. That list of city projects was identified through the Association of Washington Cities and Council and I submitted that same list to them as well.

Congress, both the House and Senate are working on their stimulus package and so is the President Elect.

It appears there will be a stimulus package.

It appears it will include infrastructure work.

It would appear that it will start within three to four months after it is approved.

Beyond that we do not know what it will contain and we will not base our budgets or our expectations upon it. We will plan for what we know and what we can do. We are ready to proceed if we get approval but we will continue our work to do as much as we can do with the resources we have here within our reach.

You will hear me talk a lot this year about economic development. It seems like I've never stopped and there is a reason.

Either we make our current businesses more successful and bring in more business or we as individual taxpayers wind up paying even more taxes.

The truth is simple.

The commercial sector pays more than 65% of all property taxes collected for the city. That is our simple financial fact.

When you get your county tax bill for your house take 12% of that bill and that is the amount that comes back to you to run the city. That's it. Now I know you have seen your assessed value go up through the county year after year. Remember, while the tax bill is based on that assessment your city only gets 12 % of that total.

Now the other hard truth for all of us is that residential property tax does not create enough income to even pay for the cost of those services delivered to those residential areas. The residential areas of cities and towns grew because the business sector supported that growth.

Business pays about 65% of the total property taxes collected for your city. Business pays eight tenths of one percent of the sales tax collected to the state to be returned to the city, Those two items by themselves add up to almost two thirds of your total General Fund budget.

So, simple math tells us for our city to be successful business must be successful. The math says if we don't want our individual property taxes to go up then businesses must be retained and expanded.

The other half of that equation is if business does not stay, if new business do not come then either our individual taxes go up or we must reduce core services.

So it is in the best interest of all citizens to find new and creative ways to help business succeed and decrease their cost and time doing business with the city.

For that we have needed their input and we depend upon their involvement with our codes and fees and our future planning.

As part of that we need to plan for the Auburn of the next generation.

The business community, civic and neighborhood groups were all a part of the multi-year project that led up to the Auburn Downtown Plan of 2001. Based on that Plan new codes were put into place, new incentives allowed for downtown development and a new 40,000 square foot medical business and a three hundred stall parking garage is rising behind city hall.

The tavern block, long the place of crime and drugs in our community, championed only by those involved and associated with the trade, is already coming down and a three story 92,000 square foot building in partnership with Key Bank will take its place.

Across the street the property of the pioneering Cavanaugh family that took a chance with a private developer and lost so much will soon come out of the bankruptcy necessary to shed themselves of that developer and begin to move forward again.

There is still more to come on four other blocks and your City Council has signed an overall development agreement for those blocks.

Business men and women are hard at work in our downtown as well with new restaurants, a tea shop and not just one of the best chocolate makers in the region but also an ice cream parlor. All across our community people are at work bringing new jobs to our community even in the face of this recession.

In fact the people of Auburn have always led the way not just talking but walking the walk and there is proof of that as well. In 2007 there were 482 business license applications processed in the city. In 2008 that figure rose to 778. Auburn does rise to the occasion.

We are at the arts and entertainment center of two counties and our live theater at The Ave is bringing people back downtown and the Performing Arts Center, our regionally acclaimed Auburn Symphony has become a symbol for cultural tourism just like our downtown art shows and next year the Farmer's Market comes back to life in Auburn. The farms might be gone but our market is coming back.

In addition the city's volunteer Transportation, Transit and Trails Committee successfully negotiated with Sound Transit, King County Metro and Pierce County Transit for the first commuter shuttle to start this spring. We hope to see additional shuttles that can be used daily as shopper shuttles for our citizens.

Further, because of those talks with Pierce County Transit there's new connections to Pierce County and the written commitment of Sound Transit in their proposal that was voted by the people of the region to build that long awaited second parking garage on the C Street lot. All of these things are part of our economic development efforts.

There is much remaining to be done. We must complete the downtown plan with decisions on business and housing for our future. We will work in partnership with the business community and look forward to the leadership of the Auburn Area Chamber of Commerce to develop that future plan.

We must look at our neighborhoods both on the hills and the flat and decide in partnership with them how they should develop and if they should re-develop.

We will look for business development and redevelopment to the north end of the city, to the west and the south and plan for the generations to come.

What is built, how it is built must change as well and not at the expense of the developer or the citizen but in support of both.

Sustainable Environment is a catch phrase used by many to mean many things. For me it is very straight forward statement.

Many years ago my great uncle worked for a man who opened the first of our national parks. He was President Theodore Roosevelt and a great believer in keeping vital resources while finding practical ways of doing so.

Practical ways.

I believe it is up to each of us to preserve our precious natural resources. We must encourage policies which facilitate efforts to encourage our businesses and citizens to act in a more environmentally safe manner. I don't mean forcing people to drive smaller cars, buy smaller houses or live with less.

It does not mean forcing them to make more costly choices. It means providing practical solutions that are cost effective to citizens and businesses.

It means working together to find methods to treat the environment better and save money for citizens and businesses alike.

Let's look at parking lots that allow for grass, a higher density residential buildings that includes a stable of hybrid cars for its residents and has lower parking requirements.

Could we allow denser – and yes that could mean taller development if there were day cares on-site, common auto uses and re-usable storm water features, solar and other treatments?

We need to re-think our current storm water facilities for residential areas that are made up of pipes and storm water retention and detention facilities that look more like prison grounds with barbed wire fenced enclosures.

We need to re-look at storm water ditches and berms, facilities that can function as parks as well as ponds.

We must bring in the residential builders and ask them to work with the city and interested citizens to find new ways to build that are economical and environmentally sound.

We cannot expect builders to come if by our rules and processes we make it too expensive to do so.

We cannot expect people to buy a home if by our practices we have made it too expensive to buy here. We must all work together to find the best solution for us all.

For business and for citizens we must work together to find the savings by using products and programs that are better for our environment right here at home.

We must also encourage investment into alternate renewable sources as well as existing abundant resources such as natural gas.

We have made a place for such investment at the Environmental Park and the Green Zone and we will work hard to make those areas as attractive for business, especially green business and usable to as many as we can.

We have an alternative transportation system in our city already in use and we are at the center of a system of bike and walking trails used for both for the commute and recreation. Future planning in our city must include this alternate transportation system and its connections to the business and residential centers.

I believe America's future depends on harnessing the innovative spirit that has powered the engine of our progress for over two centuries.

I believe that it is in the best interest of the citizens to protect that spirit from governmental interference. We should create an environment in which we can allow our children, our businesses, our scientists over at Boeing and other facilities to unleash their potential by providing a path to those that build bridges to the future rather than roadblocks. We're not going to change the world from Auburn but we can provide the best environment for change possible in Auburn.

There's another key piece to all this sitting high on the hill above us yet part of Auburn. Green River Community College can provide training for new businesses coming to town, re-training for existing employees and industries and a place where alternatives in business, in environmental work, bio-tech and others can gather around, learn and grow. Our partnership with the college is strong and we must continue to include the college as one of our primary economic development aides.

I believe the best of America can be found in its small communities and I believe Auburn is the best example of that around!

Let's go further. We have heard that there is a budget crisis at every level. No money from the Fed. The state is in trouble and cutting social service programs. The county says social service programs aren't mandated services and says to go talk to your own city and that leaves us to drop the burden on .....

There's just us - - as always.

Regardless of the situation at the county level, the state level and the federal level the work of the city goes on.

The General Fund budget of the city for 2009 was presented to Council and approved for \$61,591,290 million dollars.

That budget is made up of funds from property taxes, sales taxes and fees and fines.

Of that 61 million dollars almost 24 million dollars will go to your Public Safety staff in the Police Department and another 3.2 million dollars in your Streets Department, those

folks you have seen a lot of out there along with your police for a total for Public Safety budget of 27 million dollars or more than 44% of the total taxpayer budget.

The work of your City Attorney, Planning Department, Public Works Department, Human Resources and Court, Parks and Recreation, Information Services and Finance Department goes on every day.

Yet that 61 million dollar budget is only a part of the total fund budget of the city of \$214 million dollars for 2009.

That budget includes income and expenses from the enterprise funds such as water, sewer, storm drainage, solid waste, airport, cemetery and golf course.

Next year alone there are planned expenditures for transportation projects of 10.3 million dollars, water projects costing over 6 million dollars, sewer projects of 4.5 million dollars, storm drainage projects of 4.2 million, general government projects of 2.4 million and other fund projects of 12.1 million for a total of \$39.9 million scheduled just for the year.

It seems so much money for the amount of work we see done.

In the next two years all of us together will spend more than \$2 million dollars on the A Street corridor, \$388,000 on the traffic control system to connect the street lights on Auburn Way North, \$5 million for M Street over the next year and a half.

We will spend \$200,000 in the '09 budget on F Street from SE 4th St to Auburn Way South to be ready to build the million dollar project in 2010 to reconstruct that road.

There's a traffic improvement project at M Street and Auburn Way South, more up on 49th NE and a huge project for traffic improvement at Harvey and 8th all costing more than \$2 million dollars. Included in your budget is a half million for the signal at 8th and R Street along with a multi-million dollar project for West Valley Highway improvements that will start next year and over \$2.2 million dollars of local streets to be resurfaced in 2009 as part of our Save Our Streets program, our voter approved commitment to bring all of our local streets up to a safe level.

There's another \$1.5 million going in to Arterial Street Preservation Program for pavement maintenance and rehabilitation. You're going to see a lot of crack sealing going on over the next two years as well.

The Water Utility has ten projects costing \$6.2 million in 2009 that includes the massive \$3 million dollar Les Gove Waterline Replacement Project replacing the old water lines northwest of Les Gove Park. We'll work on the Auburn Way South Sanitary Sewer Replacement project, Lakeland Booster Pump, Academy Booster Pump.

By the way these pumps are about the size of a living room, usually buried down ten or twelve feet in the ground and the cost to buy one before we dig out the old one to replace it runs at a half million dollars – each.

There are ten major sewer projects scheduled for 2009 for \$4.4 million including the Dogwood Pump Station replacement for \$150,000 and the long awaited Power Generators project for \$1.5 million to provide back-up power for all of our sewer pump stations. It sounds like a lot but without power it could allow the system to back up into all our homes!

Sewer line replacements for 2009 are almost a million bucks for those that just have to be done.

There is the Ellingson Pump Station replacement for \$1.8 million, Les Gove neighborhood, SOS projects and Arterial Street sewer replacements for more than \$1.5 million dollars.

That's a lot of cost in a century old city to keep every thing flowing on its way – out of town!

Storm Drainage systems will have 12 projects in 2009 for \$4.2 million including \$1 million for the Peasley Canyon Storm Drain replacement, \$370,000 for the Les Gove

area, \$2 million for the White River Storm Pump Station Replacement, \$770,000 for Storm's portion of the Auburn Way South sanitary and storm water replacement, \$200,000 for pipeline repair and \$800,000 for SOS and Arterial Streets portion of repair work. You see when we tear up the roads we replace the water pipe, the storm pipe, the sewer pipe so we don't keep tearing up the road later and patching and re-patching.

None of the projects in the utilities are glamorous or exciting.

There is a six year plan that is updated yearly and the projects picked were those that absolutely must be done now to keep the system going.

The Parks Department has 10 projects for over \$8.8 million scheduled including \$7.5 million the new Community Center, \$ 976,000 in grants for the Auburn Environmental Park and this year should see the completion of the White River Trail all the way to the A Street Bridge for a cost of \$270,000.

There's much more to be done with community projects for \$1.2 million for \$200,000 for sidewalk repair, \$200,000 for traffic calming improvements in residential areas and basic functions like vehicle maintenance bay, radio system upgrade and others.

Within that budget is a specific line for jail services. Now jail services are costing all of us as taxpayers over \$4.3 million a year. We've looked at building a jail for our own prisoners and that cost is more than 30 million dollars.

We've talked to King County about trying to buy in to a future jail but so far that indicates our costs might go as high as \$50 million.

We are currently working with a group seven south county cites to build a jail for all of our prisoners with a total cost approaching \$100 million with our portion estimated at about \$29 million.

There's also a human services budget of \$591,900 and another \$600,900 programmed from the federally funded Community Development Block Grants for human service and economic development efforts.

These projects, all of these projects are funded mainly through grants and loans. The grants almost all come with a requirement for a match of funds from the city, anywhere from a 10% match to a 60% match.

If the project is one of the utilities then the match comes from that utility paid by the users of that utility.

If not, like the transportation projects, then the match comes from the General Fund, your tax-payer dollars.

You've not hear me spell out projects before. I wanted you to understand the enormity of what we all do together every single year just to build and maintain the infrastructure of our city.

But our city is not just about the dollars. There is so much more to us than just that.

There is a place in our community that has one of the highest average median incomes in two counties.

We have an area in our community with one of the lowest average median incomes in two counties.

They are separated by feet.

Our home has always been a blue collar town. We have never had much, we have always cared for our own but now, again, we are changing and in times of change there is hardship. As we have always done we must work together.

In addition there is another side of this for We are all immigrants here.

From the latest arrivals of early Americans that began to settle here several thousand years ago to the settlers from America of the 1800's during the western expansion we are immigrants.

From the Chinese that helped develop the railroads, the Japanese that settled the farms, the Greeks that worked in the factories and the Italians that worked the trains, the Koreans and Vietnamese that came home with us from the wars we are all immigrants.

Our newest arrivals are from South American and Africa, Eastern Europe and India and we are all immigrants.

Americans understand that immigration has always been the lifeblood of the United States. Each group arrives and works for the best of their children and the children to follow.

But not all of our immigrants come from a different culture. The Puget Sound area has been discovered, again.

All across the United State studies show that more people are coming to our area. The Puget Sound region will grow by more than 1.6 million people over the next twenty years and they have been arriving here for a generation. The majority of people in Auburn did not live here just twenty years ago.

We are all immigrants here.

Between the schools, the churches, the business community, private and non-profits groups and the city we want to do all we can to bring our newest arrivals into our community and we will do that in partnership.

We can do that by providing all of our children in need the summer lunch feeding program, offering English as a second language classes to all so that we may help them integrate faster with mainstream American society and help them achieve their dreams for their children. This is America where all things are possible and we know that better than most.

America has never been, nor should it ever be, a homogeneous society. We respect and celebrate the differences in the various American communities.

We honor the commonalities between all of our parts that together make us better.

Your Council understood that clearly when they went to the National League of Cities last year and asked to be included and recognized as an Inclusive Community.

That is a banner to hold high and we must all work together to make sure it is our reality.

With all of the change, the additions of rich communities and the poorer ones, the new populations and the old and all of the frustrations another problem is still there, hiding in the dark corners, watching.

For most of the last century Auburn was a community ridden with crime and despair. For decades we had the highest crime rate in the county.

That despair was reflected in the high teen suicide rate, highest teen pregnancy rate as our children gave up all hope before their lives had even started.

During the eighties gangs began to form and the police and community worked hard to root them out.

The gangs have been trying to come again. They have been driven out several times and the graffiti we have been seeing are recruiting posters for those gangs that were trying to form.

We've had several real hard line gang members living here, on the plateau and up in Lakeland but they were caught and convicted of their crimes.

We have some young wannabes trying to form up and they have been intimidating our children and neighborhoods.

The possibility of gangs coming to Auburn has been a central topic of conversation with the School District.

We are meeting and we are working together both internally and in conversation with the public to make sure those symbols of despair and crime do not establish themselves here.

But the problem of gangs and crime is not one belonging to the schools alone and our public safety officials are doing their work as well. They are out in the neighborhoods working with Block Watches, holding meetings and being directed by the citizens to make sure our community is safe.

Your City Council reacted quickly as they saw more graffiti and first they changed a forty year old law from one that made the victim pay a fine to a new ordinance that gave options for the homeowner or businesses owner including \$25 paint vouchers and painting assistance. That ordinance still included a provision that one way or another the graffiti must be cleaned up because as a community we will not allow our town to be overridden with this garbage.

Council went further and created several ordinances.

First, simply, you cannot buy spray paint products if you are under 18 in Auburn.

Next, if you are detained at the scene of an area defaced with graffiti and have graffiti tools like spray paint on you then that is cause for arrest.

We will continue to work to assist the neighborhoods.

But the underlying reasons for such things to happen have to do with our society. We must understand, plan for and change those problems.

We have lower income populations in need of service. There is frustration and drugs and despair and domestic violence. Many are isolated from their families and family problems are on the rise.

We have our newer immigrants who need services. There is frustration and drugs and despair and domestic violence. Many are isolated from their families and family problems are on the rise.

Some of our newest arrivals here are higher income populations and there is frustration with drugs, despair and domestic violence. Many are isolated from their families and family problems are on the rise.

All of our populations include people in need and we must make sure that essential care is included and government cannot do it all. We can help but we are not the answer.

The answer is the community.

Our community has always been the answer. The answer is the Free Clinic, the Auburn Food Bank, ACAP, Auburn Youth Resources and others.

The answer is the hundreds upon hundreds of people in Auburn that come to help, that work so long and hard for those in need.

The answer will be in the Auburn Multi-Service Center, the one stop shop, when we can finally provide a place where the services are located in one spot instead of having those in need traipse all over south county on poor transportation to different locations for agencies that chose the spot for low rent.

We want to take a page from organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and aggressively provide assistance to community-level organizations with a proven history of results. Results. It is far less important to track the number of people that have gone through a line but how many people an organization has gotten out of the line by meeting all their needs through their specific service and by taking responsibility to refer those in need to others to make them productive members of the community.

I believe it's important to encourage community relationships on every level and will work to encourage them, but recognize that it is not the role of government to create them. That job should be left to individuals within the communities themselves.

We must look to the churches, the Sheppard's of their flocks for this is their time to advance their efforts in their own community.

All around the Puget Sound we are a people at risk, in turmoil and in need and we are so fortunate to have a faith community here that cares so much.

They must provide the leadership that can only come from them and they are equal to the task.

This is not interference or conflict of church and state but a frank realization that within the faith communities they can ask for service to this community – now – and that service is what is needed.

They have done much. They have provided English as a Second Language in their churches, coordinated and provided assistance to the schools to do the same but there must be more.

We must find ways to work in cooperation with the faith community to provide the option to work here at home with our new populations at risk, our poorer populations as we go through this economic period and our higher income populations estranged from family and community.

All, all of those are in so much need and without the faith sector those cries for help will grow still louder.

We must look to the school district and as we have asked they have been answering. I will always be in their debt for accepting the federally subsidized Free Summer Lunch Program so that our lower income children would be assured of at least one good meal daily during the summer months.

The schools have made great strides in working with our newer populations and we have begun new efforts to work together in cooperation to provide the families with the information about how their children can be helped and where there might be classes and learning opportunities for the parents as well.

Still, we need to find new ways to provide more help and the city is pleased to be in such a great working relationship with the District to help all of our children together.

We must find more opportunities for our young people before and after school to stay in the mainstream and emerge from the school system as contributing members of our community. That means working with the community and more volunteers to help, to provide leadership and mentors. It means the city and the district can provide the platform for community involvement with the young and a symbol of the best that we can be.

Schools are a common denominator for all of our populations and by working together we can both do better.

For the last seven years we have watched our crime statistics improve, the statistics of hate and despair are dropping. Those measures of a poor industrial town are changing. The urban legend of the Good Old Days in Auburn is a legend. The reality was much darker and it is finally changing for the better.

Our Police Department has done well and with the approval of your City Council last year more than twenty new police officers have been hired. We have made additional improvements as well.

We are now able to include neighborhood policing so that once we hear a neighborhood problem we can assemble a team to focus on that one area until that problem is solved.

We have made improvements to our vehicles to allow officers to spend more time in their cars and out in the neighborhoods. We've been working in the community and have come up with guidelines for communities and businesses that shows them how to purchase video systems that are compatible with the equipment used by their police. We now have equipment to track stolen vehicles and to read license plates to identify those stolen cars even in packed parking lots.

Part of working in the community is being out in the neighborhoods and that is why I formed the Community Services group within my office to get out into the neighborhoods to homeowner association meetings, neighborhood groups or single blocks. Three to

five times a month I go out to areas in our community to discuss anything that is a concern.

If it is about speeding or criminal activity then I bring police including the chief or assistant chief. If the concerns of the neighborhood are traffic or sewers or street or any of a number of topics I'll bring the right departments to listen to the community.

Now I want the police officer there because I will always want the question asked if they want to form a Block Watch. You see, I know they work. I've seen it. There are no better eyes in the neighborhood than a neighbor's. Every time a new block watch is formed I can rest a little easier because there is one more place in town a crook does not want to go.

We must look for more ways to work with others groups to keep our community safe. Local neighborhoods, community groups, business, school district all must take an active stance in keeping our community safe. Your city council stood up and acted when they funded those additional officers and we as a community must do our part as well.

All of this is part of our public safety efforts and there is still more to do. Our Citizen Police Volunteers, CERT Volunteers, Block Watches and our Homeowner Associations are all groups that can respond in case of emergency.

We will work for a comprehensive method of working with all of these groups together in a coordinated fashion for emergency purposes and to keep our communities safe.

From the recent snow storm and floods and other emergencies we have groups across our community that are able to help. We will work together because it's our tradition, it's our history, and it is the Auburn Way.

And we live in such a beautiful place. We are the land of two rivers. We have a wonderful system of parks and trails that connect them together and are themselves connected to regional system. Our quality of life here in Auburn is the envy of many with our daily view of Mt. Rainier, the beauty of the valley and our forested hillsides. We have done much to improve that quality with more parks, more trails connections and a clear and concise statement by your Council to include pedestrian connections for leisure and commute.

Since the beginning of Auburn we have always done things our own way and we have always found a way. Some times it is a unique answer and it is always because of our rich community.

We may not be as rich in funds but we are wealthy in our people.

We are wealthy in our people, visionaries of our community like Ballard, entrepreneurs like Massey, Cugini, Peckenpaugh and Rottle. We've had regional leaders, astronauts and even governors.

This is Auburn where all things are possible,

We will find new ways to develop and support business without controlling it.

We will work together to retain the businesses we have and create fertile ground for new ones.

We must find a way to fund our infrastructure for it is the veins and arteries of a regional economy.

We must find new ways bring our different parts together, the new Auburn and the old, the rich and the poor in all of its marvelous parts and combinations.

We will work hard together to maintain our quality of life and the safety of our community.

As I have talked today I hope you heard the on phrase repeated so often. Cooperation. This may be a trying time for our nation and we will rise to this challenge. We always have. We will work together. We always have. We will continue to work in cooperation with out neighborhoods, our business community, faith community and all of the other groups that make us such a special place. We will work in cooperation on a

county level and on regional issues. We work together on state issues and on a federal level. It is what we do so well and because we do we are in a unique position.

Some people look at recent events and bring tales of woe. I see opportunity for us all.

The Puget Sound Region is an area of growth. People are moving here in ever increasing numbers. They bring jobs and housing, technology and new businesses. As the economy improves and it will then we are ready for our future.

I see an Auburn where new buildings are beginning to go up. The vision of our citizen leaders, business community and neighborhoods of a decade ago are just now starting to be recognized.

I see an Auburn that has been recognized as the arts and cultural center, the entertainment center in the heart of a two county area just beginning to recognize its own value and begin to change its self-perception and reach out to bring in the arts, the cultural tourism activities along with its entertainment potential.

I see an Auburn that is outstanding in its quality of life with the full commitment of our community to improve it.

I see an Auburn where the business community both downtown and across town are going out into the region and they have become re-activated, re-energized and ready to engage with the city and the citizens for the betterment of us all.

I see an Auburn where the Auburn School District has reached out in partnership so that we may provide a better tomorrow for our children and work together to make the best use of all of our assets today and create the leaders of our future.

I see an Auburn where because of the efforts of the Councilmembers that decided to step out, step up to the task at hand, finally the needs of the citizens of Auburn are beginning to be seen and addressed.

I see an Auburn where the infrastructure of the central point of a region-wide system of industry, manufacturing and distributing is being recognized for the first time on a state level and there is the possibility of those infrastructure needs being addressed.

I see an Auburn where the social needs of an industrial community, the needs of an immigrant community at all levels are being addressed by the community for those truly in need.

I see an Auburn of potential millionaires, captains of industries yet to be created. It is the time for the dreamers with visions of the future yet to come.

I see an Auburn where partnerships have been forming that believes in community. Where those that are willing are stepping up to the tasks at hand and that believe in our future.

I see that vision beginning to form that will become the Auburn of the future that we will all be finally able to imagine!