

THE BEST IS YET TO COME



Winter Park State of the City Address

Presented by: the Honorable Kenneth W. Bradley

Friday, January 16, 2015

*The Alford Inn
721 W. New England Ave.
Winter Park, Florida 32789*

I. INTRODUCTION:

Winter Park is great because the people of Winter Park are great! The founders of Winter Park 127 years ago planned a city with a beautiful park, a main street and a train station. What foresight they had! The people of Winter Park some 60 years ago decided to plant oak trees and forever changed our city for the better. The people of Winter Park designed and built Park Avenue and Rollins College and Winter Park Memorial Hospital and the Winter Park Library.

Together, now look at how we – the people of Winter Park – have revitalized our city:

- SunRail and a new train station
- Trader Joe's
- Martin Luther King Jr., Park
- Capen House move
- Heritage Park – new office building where the former state office building stood
- A new and improved Fairbanks Avenue, soon with underground utilities
- The Peacock Fountain
- A Super Bowl commercial
- An important contribution to the region's Dr. P. Phillips Performing Arts Center
- An urban forestry management plan
- Owning our electric, water and sewer utilities with undergrounding
- Solar panels and electric car charging stations
- The Alford Inn

Winter Park is great because the people of Winter Park are great!

And the best is yet to come!

II. THE STATE OF THE CITY:

The State of our City has never been better. Our finances are rock solid with substantial reserves—infinately better than when I took office in March 2009. Our city is safe and secure. Development is appropriate and steady. Our parks and infrastructure have received smart, targeted investments. Our future has never been brighter.

And yes, the best is yet to come!

III. WHAT I’VE LEARNED AS MAYOR:

It has been the honor of my life to serve these past six years as your Mayor. Today I have literally hundreds of individuals to thank for their service, their dedication, their sacrifices and their support. But I would like to take Mayoral prerogative to thank a wonderful woman who has been beside me throughout this public service journey—Winter Park’s First Lady and mine—Ruth Bradley!

In the almost six years I’ve been Mayor, I have learned so much.

A. The Employees of our City are our greatest asset

I’ve learned: the employees of our city, and government are dedicated, supportive and innovative. There may be citizens that feel because they pay taxes, they can dictate to these wonderful public servants. Nothing is further from the truth. We need to say “thank you”. Please join me in thanking them for their hard work.

B. The Best Form of Government remains the least government

I’ve learned: our form of government in this United States is still the best form of government in earth’s history. The liberties entrusted to us by our forefathers remain solid and essential. And we should never forget how privileged we are to protect and defend our constitution and our form of government.

I have had the privilege as Mayor of addressing each year the Winter Park chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) as they celebrate the U.S. Constitution each September. Once, when I was describing how this is the best country on earth, I began to speak eloquently about our bill of rights:

- The right to assemble
- The right to worship freely this weekend
- The right of free speech—to say your Mayor is “full of it”
- And the right to bear arms

President Ronald Reagan, in his farewell address to the Nation in January 1989 said this (modified):

“Ours was the first revolution in the history of mankind that truly reversed the course of government, and with three little words: ‘We the People.’ Our Constitution is a document in which ‘We the People’ tell the Government what it is allowed to do. ‘We the people’ are free.” And I hope we have once again been reminded that citizens are not free unless government is limited.”

I too have learned: the least government is the best government.

C. Government needs to do what it does best

I’ve learned citizens and the marketplace often accomplish more and are better at many things than government is.

I’ve also learned: government needs to do what it does best. For example, public safety is the domain of our local government. And Winter Park has one of the best police and fire departments in the United States, led by two award winning chiefs. Chief Jim White—our fire chief—was named the 2014 Florida Chief of the Year. Chief Brett Railey—our police chief--received the prestigious, national J. Stannard Baker Award for Highway Safety. Let’s thank them for their service!

D. Governments can work together—and we are in this together

I’ve learned: our neighboring cities, our County, our State and Federal governments are our friends. When Winter Park works closely with other elected officials and governments, great things happen.

E. Practice

I’ve learned: before you throw out the first pitch for a little league game, practice!

F. Great government is great because its people and its focus are great.

I’ve learned: great government can be very successful without raising taxes. I’ve learned great government can be successful by investing in what our citizens want and need—like paving roads, providing clean water, making sure our lights turn on, and keeping our parks nice. I’ve learned government is great when it lives within its means.

Winter Park has done this the past six years, during one of the worst economic periods in this nation’s history. And we **MUST** continue to do this in the days and years ahead.

IV. MY HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF WINTER PARK:

Are our best days behind us? Or in front of us? Now, I invite you to join me in thinking, dreaming and focusing on the future—on our future. My belief is the best is yet to come!!!

As I conclude my second term as Mayor, I have many hopes for our City—and for you.

A. A City Vision:

I hope our City's visioning process in 2015 will culminate in a vision for Winter Park for the next 50 years. I hope the vision will include all aspects of Winter Park including education, health, economic vitality, the environment and civic engagement. I hope the vision process will include thousands in sharing their thoughts and dreams.

I hope the Citizens of Winter Park can in 10 years live 10 years longer and better on average than the nation, and that this is well documented--creating another superior reason to live in Winter Park.

Let us dream and hope now for an even brighter future!

B. Our City's Finances:

I hope our City can continue to rationally balance our tax base with appropriate and new businesses, not just relying upon homeowner's property taxes as a key source of revenue.

I hope the City's utilities can continue to provide outstanding service, reliability and lower the costs to our citizen customers. Further, I hope the City's elected officials will continue to treat the utilities as a business, assuring appropriate reserves, appropriate cash flows and debt. "Profits" can then be either returned to citizen customers with lower costs or through re-investments in our infrastructure e.g. undergrounding.

C. Civic Engagement:

I hope our City can become the region and ultimately the nation's example of civic engagement and civility. And that we can hold each other accountable to vote--increasing voter participation rates dramatically.

D. City Improvements:

I hope our City can build or rebuild a new library, which can be a center of commerce, information and innovation well into the next generation.

I hope our City can invest in institutions such as the Winter Park Playhouse, new museums and truly be the region's center of arts and culture.

I hope our City can adopt rationale and substantive environmental policies including water conservation, new forms of energy—especially solar and garbage to electricity--and more recycling.

I hope our City can pass a new Historic ordinance which appropriately encourages the owners of key properties to be historically and architecturally designated.

I hope we can continue to improve Mead Gardens and assure Lake Lillian restoration. Another major step takes place this year with the restoration of the “otter pond”—funded by the State of Florida.

E. Transportation:

I hope SunRail continues to fulfill its promise—the development of an alternative transportation mode which can bring more workers, shoppers, visitors and citizens to and from Winter Park – freeing up our roads.

I hope we can get FDOT to paint the rail road bridge over 17-92 and fix a few of the railroad crossings. And quiet zones will become a reality--improving the quality of our life.

I hope we can improve downtown parking—both by creating new spaces and by using technology to find available parking spots in real time.

I hope in partnership with regional, state and Federal authorities Winter Park can develop smart forms of traffic control, using technology so drivers and their cars can move through our City as if they are in a *police led* motorcade.

I hope the driverless car will be a reality within 10 years along with home robots and monitoring. Thus citizens will be able to live their entire lives in their homes and die the way most people desire to, in their beds, asleep, at the age of 101.

F. Economic Development:

I hope that Rauvadage will fulfill its original vision—a live, work and play neighborhood versus just an area of large apartment complexes.

G. Winter Park’s Vision:

I hope we always remember Winter Park is an “oasis”, not an island.

I hope Winter Park continues to be recognized as one of the best places to live, work and play in Florida.

I hope we realize the people of Winter Park—those who live here, those who work here, those who play here and those who want to live, work and play here—are our most important differentiator. Yes indeed, the best is yet to come!

V. WINTER PARK'S BEST DAYS ARE STILL AHEAD:

In my past five state of the city addresses I've spoken about:

- "A Healthy Winter Park" (2010)
- "The Power of One" (2011)
- Winter Park Where "Every day is Exceptional" (2012)
- Winter Park "Our Home" (2013)
- Winter Park Works Best When Winter Park Works Together (2014)

President Reagan concluded his farewell address to the nation with this question. With slight modification, his question still is very pertinent today. "And how stands the city on this winter day? More prosperous, more secure, and happier than it was six years ago. We made the city stronger, we made the city freer, and we left her in good hands. All in all, not bad. Not bad at all."

Winter Park's best days are truly yet to come, because the people of Winter Park's best days are yet to come!

May God continue to bless you abundantly with health and wealth. May God continue to watch over and protect those who keep us safe--our first responders, our fire, police and staff. And may God continue to bless this place we call home--Winter Park, Florida.

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