

MAYOR BRUMMEL'S 2006 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Good morning and welcome to you all. It is a privilege and honor for me to represent the City of Warrenville today as its Mayor. Thank you all for attending this event and participating in another of the many fine opportunities for community building afforded us by the Warrenville Chamber of Commerce.

I'd like to begin with a digression. I figure if I start off with a digression, I can't be accused of getting off the point because I haven't even gotten to the point yet. There are two questions that keep popping up since I was elected Mayor, and I'd like to take a moment today to give you my best answers.

Again and again I'm asked: How is Vivian Lund doing? My stock answer for this one is generally: "I believe she is doing well, in fact from all appearances, she appears to be doing better than ever. You can check this out for yourself -- look around the room, locate the lady who is smiling ear-to-ear because she is not up here today -- that's Vivian.

I see her from time to time at City Hall helping out in some form or another, and she tarried briefly in my office one day. There I was, up to my elbows in stacks of memos and reports, my phone message light blinking accusingly, my e-mail box overflowing with messages mostly marked "urgent", trying to figure out what to do with the two appointments I had booked for the same time slot that afternoon, all the time wondering if I would ever see the inside of my little shop again, or build another cabinet. This gracious lady took a moment to stop in the Mayor's office, give the new Mayor a warm handshake with a lustrous smile, and said: "I'm so glad YOU'RE here."

She came by another time. It was late on a Monday afternoon and all of us were engaged in the last minute, occasionally frantic preparations for that night's Council meeting. I must have looked a little stressed, because again I received that warm handshake, the big smile with a larger than usual twinkle in her eye, and these words of comfort: "I think Dwight and I will catch a movie tonight".

So, rest easy. Vivian Lund is doing just fine. Between her beloved flowers, Chamber of Commerce activities, Church involvement, preparations for the 4th of July celebration, and keeping Dwight off balance, she is as busy as ever.

I would like to remind you that she was Mayor for the first four months of 2005, and I encourage you to take a moment now to acknowledge that and thank her for it.

The second question I find myself answering frequently is: "So, Dave, what's it like being Mayor?" I have a stock answer for this one too: "There is never enough time; I'm always late for one thing or another -- but I'm getting really good at changing my clothes fast. I can go from shop attire to office attire and vice versa faster than I ever imagined possible.

Most people who experience three careers in their lives have the good sense to end the second one before embarking on the third. In theory, being Mayor is a part time position, but as Vivian I'm sure will testify, it will devour every hour you allow it access to, and some that you try desperately to conceal. If given some time to elaborate on my stock answer, I would mention the surreal factor. I see my name on the office door with Mayor above it; someone says "Hi, Mayor" at the supermarket; I get one of those not-infrequent and sometimes heated reminders that not everyone sees particular issues the same way I do; I find myself giving a speech to a Chamber gathering, and I end up scratching my head and reflecting: "How in the world did this happen?" One minute I'm gluing up a Cabinet face -- the next minute I'm running a City Council meeting. Two totally different worlds, with way different ground rules. Consider the inevitable mistakes we all make. You know if I mess up in the shop, I can just cut up my errors and throw them in the trash. No one is the wiser. No one is talking about my cutting that piece of cherry short four times in a row at dinner that night. However, in the Mayor world, say or do something imprudent and it ends up on TV and in the papers. It's different, I tell you.

I guess that is the best way to sum things up. This is a far different journey than I would ever have envisioned for myself. Different "good" or different "bad" you ask? That, of course depends on when you ask me. On balance, I will tell you, I consider myself one very fortunate fellow. How many people in their late fifties discover a new passion for their lives? I'm grateful for the opportunity to use some tools from the bottom of my mental toolbox that I haven't used in a long time, as well as some new ones that I am having to learn to use successfully for the first time -- all in service to a cause greater than myself -- the wonderful little community of Warrentville.

So, how exactly, is Warrentville doing? I struggled with how to answer this -- obviously there are quite a few ways to measure the health of a community. One of the mainstays of this sort of speech is to enumerate significant successes of the preceding year. I think that is important. Many of the items I list represent a significant effort, many times above and beyond what is expected, from one of our team members. Following this recognition, we'll look at some processes that are under way that will hopefully lead to success stories and progress for reporting next year at this time.

Some things of interest from the past year:

- The city's new webpage was launched in October containing over 200 pages. The more user-friendly, informative and aesthetically pleasing site is the result of a year's worth of work by staff, consultants and volunteers;
- The Cable Communications Commission this year aired 50 public access programs on educational topics and community events;
- Through our ACORN Van program, 2,261 rides were provided free of charge to Warrentville's disabled and senior citizens;
- For the first time, Warrentville now has a full time Property Maintenance Code Enforcement Officer;
- The City continues to enhance its outreach to the Spanish-speaking community. Our newly-hired Billing Clerk is of Hispanic descent and speaks fluent Spanish. Also, the Administration Department has a permanent City representative on the

- Hispanic Council, resulting in increased communication and interaction; Officer Sal Perez of the Police Department and Ana Vainisi in Administration are also fluent in Spanish;
- An agreement with other local entities and KerrMcGee was finally signed and the cleanup of Kress Creek and the West Branch of the DuPage River commenced. The EPA projected timeline brings this process to Warrenville in the fall of 2006 or spring of 2007. Concurrent with this agreement was the announcement of a \$10 million federal grant to be used in the restoration of the river bed and banks, most of which will be used within Warrenville;
 - The police department inaugurated its Safe Streets program which encourages a neighborhood to work together and circulate a petition requesting the Warrenville Police Dept. to form a partnership to meet short term needs and make long range plans to solve traffic related problems. Three neighborhoods took advantage of this program in 2005;
 - Our Finance Dept. received the Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting for the 12th consecutive year;
 - The City changed medical insurance carriers this year to Blue Cross. The change is expected to save the City \$100,000 the each year;
 - Construction was begun on Monarch Landing, the Erickson Retirement Community project located partially in Warrenville. Not only did Warrenville get part of this great development, we gained a generous and community minded corporate citizen;
 - Road Program expenditures totaling \$1,651,866 were approved;
 - In April, voters elected a new Mayor (the first new Mayor in twenty years) and four new alderpersons. The impact of those leaps of faith remains to be seen, but we are hopeful;
 - Implementation of the new Water and Sanitary Sewer Main Capitol Expansion Project continued apace with work completed on Riverside Ave., Batavia Rd. and Branch Ave.;
 - The Warrenville Centre Project, which projected at more than \$14 million, was the largest mixed use redevelopment project ever proposed outside of Cantera, was not approved by the City;
 - The Police Department added a Special Operations Commander position as well as two additional patrol officers, bringing the total of patrol officers to 21;
 - Extension of our water service was approved to Fermilab, increasing annual revenues to the enterprise fund by \$26,718, with no additional annual fixed costs to the City;
 - Another cellular tower lease agreement was added to the eight already existing, with additional annual revenues of \$21,000 with 4% annual increase;
 - Commercial and residential construction permits were issued by the Building Department for projects with a total monetary value of \$20,347,699;
 - With City of Warrenville support, the Warrenville Park District opened its new 23,000 sq. ft. recreation center, filling a void in the community that has long needed to be filled;

- Three more new restaurants opened for business in Cantera: Fresh City, Wolfgang Puck Express and Al's Beef. Other new construction brings the wildly successful Cantera project to within a stone's throw of completion;
- The special needs playground dream at Bower Elementary School became a reality through the dedication of many volunteers, a \$50,000 grant from the City, a \$50,000 grant from Navistar International, and substantial in-kind donations from Monarch Landing and others;
- Leone Schmidt Heritage Park was formed on Second St. at Warrenville Rd.;
- The City purchased a new vacuum sewer cleaning truck. Okay, that may not be a highlight to you, but the guys at Public Works got a new tool, and some of us get excited about that sort of thing;
- Erik Bush, our Finance Director, decided to move on to a better opportunity, as we knew his talent would eventually lead him to do. The City hired the PAR Group to help find his successor, as he can never really be replaced;
- As promised when we sought and gained Home Rule status from the voters, the City approved a tax levy with no new increases in property taxes.

All in all, a robust year for our little town, a town that shows, I hope you will agree, much promise looking ahead. Now I'd like take some time to highlight those initiatives I referenced earlier that began in 2005 and, I think, are of particular interest and importance.

In my listing of significant items, I mentioned the Warrenville Centre Project, a development that many of us thought had much to offer Warrenville, but was voted down by the City Council in June. The City Council deserves much credit for the way they handled this very difficult issue. It was one of those that good people made persuasive arguments on both sides, and I am proud of the way our elected and appointed officials handled themselves. I was personally disappointed in the final decision, but as a firm believer in the democratic process, I accept the outcomes of that process with the expectation that I may disagree with some of them. And, I have learned, buried inside every apparent defeat can be found an opportunity if you care to dig for it.

I found direction when I had to face the inevitable question: "What next? Something you supported was just defeated. So, what next?" The only answer that made sense to me was: "Let it go and look forward."

To move forward I needed to know why the Council did not approve Warrenville Centre and what the Aldermen needed to be ready for the next big development decision. What I heard in individual interviews with each Alderman was unanimous and twofold: we didn't have an overall plan and more information was needed.

Okay, a good start. To make sure I heard everyone correctly, on July 19th we held a Council Priorities Planning Workshop for nearly three hours. The Council listed and discussed as many current issues that they could think of and ranked them from "0" – No importance: do not spend time or money on this issue, to "4" – Highest priority:

This is urgent/very important need for the City. Money and personnel resources will be allocated to meet this need. Staff will be directed to reallocate existing programs and services to address this matter. The Council spoke very clearly: “Develop TIF # 2 opportunities” was ranked 4.00 – highest priority in the General Fund Financial category. Under Economic Development/Re-development Initiatives, “develop a subarea plan for Uptown” and “develop a subarea plan for Downtown” both received a ranking of 3.89, the highest in the category. And under the Community Planning/General Development umbrella, “Complete Subarea Plans” was ranked 4.00. The message I heard from individual Aldermen was now a clearly stated imperative: Work on a plan for our two community centers that can be used in the future to determine what development/re-development is appropriate.

To help address the stated need for more information, the Council approved a scientifically accurate survey of Warrenville citizens administered by an outside firm specializing in such work. The Council approved this idea and in October Warrenville’s very first of its kind community survey was completed. The results were gratifying.

First of all, our survey had the highest return rate of any survey yet completed by the company: 50%. One out of every two households called was willing to take 20-25 minutes to answer questions and share thoughts about their community. The survey revealed five key themes:

- residents feel Warrenville is a good place to live;
- residents want more opportunities for information and involvement;
- residents do not want City services cut, but rather want them to improve and potentially expand;
- residents want the City to use restaurant and bar tax and user fees as much as possible if additional revenue is needed;
- residents want and are concerned about development and related impacts and opportunities. It was clear that through the eyes of the citizens, growth, development and traffic related issues are the most important items the City needs to focus on in the coming years.

All of this dovetails very well with what our talented and dedicated staff reminds us as often as we will listen: the best way to maximize the benefits and minimize the negative impacts of inevitable change is to plan for it, and then, where it is possible and makes sense fiscally, work to facilitate implementation of the City’s plans. The alternative, to simply react to whatever comes along, which we have had to do outside of Cantera many times in the past due to lack of resources and/or political will, seems particularly unappealing to me on a couple of levels.

First, the Aldermen made it clear that they are focused on the future and have unanimously thus far supported proposals from Community Development to take the inaugural steps in developing a program for the future, beginning with the consideration of hiring a consultant team of experts to aid in the development of a plan for the future of

what has been identified as the Old Town Civic Center Subarea. Seed money has been included by the Council in the FY2006 budget in the amount of \$75,000. A grant in this amount has also been applied for and there is the money the City has received for the sale of the Townline Road right-of-way that was set aside by a past Council for one-time special projects, some of which it make sense to me to use for developing plans for the future.

Second, the City has already invested millions in TIF money to revitalize the “heart” of our community. This investment and the resulting improved facilities/infrastructure has and will continue to create interest in private development and re-development. Without stretching too far, it is not hard to identify 30-50 acres within this subarea either available for development or has had some interest in being redeveloped.

We know from experience that private property owners and the private development community will continue to request approvals and/or propose projects on these sites that they believe make sense from an economic and market perspective. Without a clear plan, the City Council will not have a clear understanding of what the community wants and supports on these sites. Without a plan, the City will find it increasingly difficult to make policy decisions related to the allocation of TIF funds. I am absolutely convinced that a clear, well thought out, publicly developed and supported plan will allow the City to maximize the benefits and minimize the negative impacts of the change that is inevitably going to occur in this area. To this end, I encourage and support the Council in actions and decisions that will make the Old Town Civic Center Subarea Plan a reality.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to a Community Development Department program initiative that was begun in 2005 and I see it as having considerable potential. It’s called: Strong Neighborhoods = Strong City. Every community is faced with continuing property maintenance and related neighborhood issues. The traditional response to these problems has been to rely on the enforcement of City ordinances, police department intervention and the court system to hammer violators into compliance. Over the course of many discussions, it was clear that some of us thought this single-faceted approach was inadequate. Whenever a story surfaced about a neighborhood changing permanently for the better, one key element was always present: the residents’ vocal and active participation in the process.

One of the reasons Home Rule appeared attractive to some of us was that it granted us the flexibility to create a custom program for Warrenton encompassing outreach, communication, education, cooperation and voluntary compliance as well as enforcement.

In 2005 we began implementation of the first phase of what promises to be a long term effort. The first outreach meeting was held on January 11, 2006 with the residents and homeowners association representatives from the Winchester subdivision. Subsequent meetings are currently being planned for other neighborhoods and subdivisions throughout the City. Ultimately, what is envisioned is the development of some form of strategic plan approach, possibly involving expanding existing and/or developing new

program initiatives, to deal with the police, code enforcement, social service, infrastructure, recreation space and other issues associated with keeping all of our neighborhoods safe and good places to live and raise a family.

I thank you for your attention today. May all of you enjoy health and prosperity in the coming year, and I thank the Chamber for all its fine work in 2005, and wish it a most successful 2006 in pursuit of its' stated mission: "To promote economic growth and the civic and social well-being of the Warrenville region." I look forward to seeing you all again soon. Thank you.