

Good afternoon and happy New Year.

It is a great pleasure for me to join with you today to present my first State of the Town Address. I am thankful to be able share my thoughts with you about our Town and how we can work together to address issues of mutual concern.

While much has been accomplished in the last year to 24 months I would like to take this time with you to speak about where we are headed as opposed to where we have been. Working cooperatively this Town Council has a positive, proactive agenda to move forward with the necessary focus on business development, transportation improvements, quality of life initiatives and assuring an adequate supply of water and sewer resources.

I am proud to serve with the dedicated members of our Council, our excellent staff, our various Boards and Commissions; and, our citizen volunteers.

### **Comprehensive Plan – Putting an Emphasis on Business**



One of the overarching goals of our Comprehensive Plan is to ensure that our community maintains its historic leadership role to provide business services in western Loudoun County. The Council recognizes that the Town must continue to expand and promote its business tax base to ensure the long-term fiscal health of our Town.

I commend the Planning Commission for the hard work they put into the plan and the public for all of the input they have provided over the years. I want to especially thank Dennis Beese for his leadership in shepherding the plan through the public process and getting the job done.

Now that the Plan has been adopted by both the Commission and Council it must be implemented. The Council as a whole is committed to achieving that result sooner rather than later. To that end the Council has provided the necessary financial and staff resources to the Planning Commission to develop the ordinance changes and other planning documents to implement the plan. The Council has adopted a resolution giving direction to the Commission that we anticipate Commission action by no later than March 31 of this year on implementing several of the major initiatives contained in the plan.

In ensuring that our business community has an important voice at the table I was pleased to vote to appoint Joan Lehr to the Planning Commission and long-time resident and community leader Walter Voskian to the Board of Architectural Review.

With the excellent leadership of our Planning Director, Martha Semmes, our downtown revitalization program is moving full steam ahead and our branding and marketing efforts are being implemented. My congratulations to Martha, the planning staff and to Marty

Kloeden for the awards the Town has received from the Loudoun County Design Cabinet and most recently the Virginia Downtown Development Association for our downtown projects.

I was pleased to attend the groundbreaking for the new INOVA office building, the new GeoStructures headquarters on Browning Court, and a number of ribbon cuttings for new businesses or for businesses that have been expanded. Other major economic development projects are in the pipeline. I am optimistic that Purcellville is well positioned to be a positive partner in helping the private sector make the investments necessary into our existing business/commercial base for the long term benefit of our community.

### **Preserving our Heritage**



A long-standing goal of this and previous Councils was recently fulfilled when the Virginia Department of Historic Resources listed the Purcellville Historic District on the Virginia Landmarks Register and recommended the district to the federal government for listing on the National Register of Historic places. While these designations are honorary and do not involve any additional local regulations, owners of historic properties in the district may be eligible for State and Federal tax credits if they undertake substantial rehabilitation of their property. The Town hopes that this will not only promote tourism within the town, but also will encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of the Town's historic buildings and help Purcellville retain its historic small town character.

To help inform our property owners on the benefits of these credits, I have requested our Director of Planning to help coordinate a half-day presentation from the appropriate State officials to help inform property owners how they may be eligible for these credits to make further investments in their properties.

### **Improving Our Business Review Processes**

To encourage business development improving our business review processes is something that the Council is serious about and has adopted as one of our top ten priority measures for the current fiscal year and I suspect in subsequent years as well. To that end our staff has met with business leaders to better understand the concerns of the community in getting projects through the permitting process.

Since April of last year we have taken steps to:

- Increase use of the administrative zoning permit site plan process for building conversion or minor additions.
- Update Permit process flowcharts for all permit applications and put all

applications on the Town website

- Hire an outside engineer to assist with plan review
- Undertake research on shared parking
- Establish an internal development tracking report
- Work on recommended changes to downtown commercial zoning district regulations, landscaping, screening and parking regulations
- Hire outside legal counsel to begin revising zoning ordinance

I can assure you that these are just the beginning of the improvements that we will be considering.

### **Responsibly Addressing Our Transportation Problems**

Clearly the largest challenge facing our Town, County and region is transportation. Purcellville must realize, however, that for the most part we have no choice but to work to resolve these challenges on our own. I was pleased that the Council adopted my proposal to create a Transportation Committee to place the appropriate emphasis on this subject – the Committee Chairman, Tom Priscilla, is doing an excellent job in providing focused leadership in this area.



We are undertaking a number of projects to help move traffic more efficiently in our Town. Traffic lights have been approved for Main Street at Hatcher Avenue and North 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. They are funded with both Town and State money and we hopefully will see construction commence in the late Spring or early Summer. Using State funding has been a challenge and has slowed down the progress of these projects, but they are moving forward.

Furthermore, we are close to reaching 100% completion for the design of the Main Street and Maple Avenue intersection. Once design completion is reached we will then be able to have a preliminary cost for the construction. At that time we will be reaching out to our partners on the State and Federal levels of government in the effort to help obtain funding for this critically important project. Make no mistake about it, regardless if both the Southern Collector Road and interchange at Route 690/Bypass 7 is built, traffic studies reveal that this intersection must be upgraded.

For the long term the Town Council as a priority item for this fiscal year has called for the implementation of a Comprehensive Traffic Study of the entire Town. This study will serve as a tool for our Council and future Councils. I expect that it will be funded in our upcoming fiscal year's capital program.

Equally important to roads is the need for improved pedestrian access. I can tell you personally that I am not satisfied with the progress we have made in moving forward with our sidewalk improvement projects, but we are putting an increased focus on process and getting results for the projects that we have designed and funding in place. We have made some improvements in completing sidewalk links on Main Street and on Hatcher, but there is much more to do.

### **Utilities – Planning for Today and the Future**

The Council has the ultimate responsibility to our citizens and business community by ensuring the adequate provision of water and sewer for the long term. This basic service that we provide is so critically important to health and safety of our residents and the long-term economic development success of our community.

To meet the long-term utility needs of our community the Town currently is in the design and regulatory process to expand and upgrade our sewage treatment plant. The mandate of the Chesapeake Bay Act puts quite a burden on the Town to upgrade our plant with little financial assistance from either the State or Federal governments. This work, however, must be done.



The largest challenge that we have is to secure additional water resources for our future. As presently zoned, according to an analysis by Dewberry & Davis, the Town would need to provide nearly 2.9 million gallons of water a day. Considering that we produce a safe yield of 668,000 gallons of water per day we are considerably challenged. The implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will help cut that need to nearly one-half of projected demand, but we must secure greater water resources.

To that end we are undertaking a number of initiatives:

1. We are still pursuing the completion of a second reservoir. The challenges related to making that happen in a timely fashion are well known.
2. We are pursuing additional ground water resources have made an offer to the County to purchase approximately 60 acres of Fields Farm for water resources.
3. We are in the process of updating our Water Resources Study to take a look back at all of the options that have been presented to the Town in the past that were not pursued.

We have an experienced hand leading the Council's Infrastructure Committee in Dr. Jim Wiley and I am confident that with his leadership and the other members of the Council we will make progress on this important issue during the coming months.

## **Fiscal Responsibility**

I am extremely proud of the efforts of the Council in putting in place policies to ensure the strong fiscal footing of our community not only for the immediate, but for the long-term. The Council as part of its reorganization in July created a Ways & Means Committee that takes into account not only our Town financial policies and personnel issues, but economic development as well. Chaired by our Vice-Mayor, Greg Wagner, the Committee has done a fine job in focusing our efforts on economic development and improving process.

In the past two years we have been able to reduce our reliance on assessment driven and new residential development generated revenues from an on average amount of \$850,000 per year to \$0. This puts us in good standing for the upcoming fiscal year as other municipalities must deal with the harsh fact that assessments are no longer on steroids and the pace of residential development has slowed.

We have adopted policies that protect our fiscal reserves from the political temptation to spend them down to artificially lower the tax rate with no concern as to the impact for the future.

This was the case when I first took office as a member of the Council when during our first budget deliberations we discovered that our operating reserves for the water and sewer funds were being drawn down to artificially keep rates low. In fact, at the pace the Town was proceeding we would have depleted the water reserve fund within a two year period. We fixed that problem by initially reducing utility spending, bringing in outside financial experts to help us better invest our funds and a graduated four-year remediation program to appropriately set rates. Most importantly we set a fee structure which provided for cost of services provided.

Our commitment to fiscal discipline and responsibility has already paid dividends. By committing to a strong fiscal reserve and adopting fiscal policies when the Town went to the market in 2005 to borrow for transportation, pedestrian access and other capital projects the rate we received saved taxpayers some \$3 million compared to what we were being offered by Rural Development. I expect that commitment to fiscal responsibility to continue from our current Council.

Just as important we have set as a goal in the Comprehensive Plan of achieving a 30% level of tax base for business properties. Today, only 14% of our tax base is attributable to business properties. If we are serious about long-term property tax relief for our residents we must improve our focus on business development, not rooftops to stoke economic development.

While I have mentioned specifically three members of Council let me also point out to you the fine deeds of my other colleagues.

Public Safety Chairman CJ Walker has done an outstanding job helping bring to our Police Department the resources and necessary focus on community policing. Purcellville as the hub of western Loudoun faces many public safety challenges due to the number of people who either do business or traverse our Town on a daily basis. Under CJ's leadership we have recruited a top notch Chief of Police and several new members of the Department to protect our community.

We are also fortunate to have both Steve Varnecky and Janet Clarke share their talents with us. Both bring valuable insight to the Council from both the public sector and private sector perspective. Their contributions to the Council in the short time that they have served are invaluable and they both are committed to putting the concerns of the Town first.

### **Conclusion**



Purcellville is a great place to live and raise a family. We are fortunate to have an involved citizenry who make a difference every day of the week in our community. We are just as fortunate to have a business community that has demonstrated time and time again that you care about our neighborhoods and the residents we serve.

I would like to conclude with a quote from one of our country's greatest Presidents, Theodore Roosevelt:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.”

I can assure you ladies and gentleman that the members of the Town Council are not timid souls. We are committed as a body to ensure that our neighborhoods, our Town is well positioned not only for this New Year or the next, but for many years to come.

Thank you for inviting me here this afternoon.