

# **2014 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

## **JANUARY 6, 2014**

### **MAYOR ARDELL F. BREDE**

Happy New Year on this 12<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas - Epiphany. For the record, according to Forbes, the 78 items that make up the Twelve Days of Christmas, would cost \$27,393.17 a 7.7% increase from last year; and, if you bought those same items on line, it would cost you \$39,762.61...45% more than buying them in person. Our 2014 City budget property tax is \$50,048,118 which is the same as the 2013 property tax, no increase!

The Chinese New Year - January 31, 2014, - is the Year of the Horse. And speaking of horses, Rochester is often characterized as a one-horse town. My response is "that isn't bad if your horse is Secretariat." Our Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce has over 1400 members, Mayo Clinic being the largest. But over one-half of their members have 4 or less employees. Small business is great business to us. All facets of our area economy are important: Hospitality; technology; manufacturing; and, agriculture. We do have great diversity in our City which allows us to experience multiple cultural events from St. Patrick's Day to Cinco de Mayo to Oktoberfest and many more. Of course, all of these have a significant Arts component in them. Together, we have an ever increasing vibrant community - resulting in far less "There's nothing to do in Rochester" comments. More on this later.

This past year saw Mayo Clinic and Rochester introduce, and get passed by the Minnesota Legislature, a major piece of legislation - Destination Medical Center - DMC. Thanks to all who worked tirelessly on this and have it pass in one legislative session - amazing! Legislators and staff are to be commended for this which will transform our city significantly while retaining the qualities that make us great, that is to build upon Health, Hope and Hospitality. Dr. Charles Mayo once said, "There is no fun like work", and the work has begun. Cities worldwide compete to host the Olympics, and when successful, they build signature venues that identify their city for decades, perhaps generations to come. It strikes me that we have a similar "Olympic" opportunity. Walt Disney said, "I can never stand still. I must explore and experiment. I am never satisfied with my work. I resent the limitations of my own imagination!" Our only limitation will be our own and the developer's creativity and imagination in creating the future of Rochester for our visitors, patients and yes, for ourselves.

In addition to DMC, and in fact supplementing it, we are hopeful that we will finally experience success in securing State bonding funds for the expansion of our Mayo Civic Center. The \$81 million dollar project is to be funded by \$37 million bonding money and the local match funded by a 3% increase in our local hotel/motel lodging tax. This project is ready to go.

And, while I am extremely proud of our City, a city which is frequently honored by being "one of the best...fill in the blank", top 10 etc., we have earned that reputation. I have interviewed hundreds of citizens who are applying for openings on our various boards and commissions, most recently 21 for 7 positions on the new Mayo Civic Center Commission. Without exception, these are individuals who want to contribute, invest in Rochester, wanting to "give back", without having any ulterior negative agenda. Thank you to you all! We are continuing to "Build an Inclusive Community," a welcoming community, but, unfortunately, not all who come and live here find it so.

During this year, I will be leading an effort to develop a Compassionate City Campaign. We already have a strong basis for this. We have strong neighborhoods, places of work, spirituality, and education. This will be a year-long effort requiring leadership in all those areas, but also by the City Council and Mayor. There are cities in the United States that already claim they are the most compassionate, but I know that with our unique history, confluence of diverse cultures and languages we will create a unique path to becoming a community in which compassion comes alive. Compassion can take many forms ranging from shoveling the snow for an elderly neighbor to helping read to a struggling student. At a recent Gamehaven Boy Scout breakfast, I challenged them and our City to take a page from the Scout handbook and practice the motto "Do a Good Turn Daily."

The recent 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Mayor's Medal of Honor once again recognized some of these individuals who do great deeds "under the radar". Their stories were unbelievable. What a joy and honor it is to recognize them. Many do what I refer to as random acts of kindness, to which I think an additional form of recognition might be Random Acts of Selfless Kindness - acronym RASK - maybe these people are the new "little RASKals." They and many others are already helping Rochester become a Compassionate City. You'll be hearing more about this during the year.

Bryant H. McGill said "There are amazingly wonderful people in all walks of life; some familiar to us and others not. Stretch yourself and really get to know people. People are, in many ways, one of our greatest treasures." I couldn't agree more.

As we get to know people, we may discover that the world, including Rochester, is not always as it seems. There are those that are: homeless; looking for jobs; victims of sexual assault and rape; and, children that have been abducted and become enslaved in a system of human sex trafficking. The latter being a focus of the Sisters of Saint Francis at Assisi Heights to help put an end to Modern Day Slavery. Part Three of "Protecting our Children - Breaking the Chains of Modern Day Slavery" events will occur later this week.

The City of Rochester, Olmsted County and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District are developing a Memorandum of Understanding for the Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission; that will work collaboratively within the criminal justice system to strengthen local planning, analysis and coordinating capabilities and assure better coordinated decision-making processes to improve the local criminal justice system. I, Council Present Staver, City Administrator Kvenvold, Police Chief Peterson and City Attorney Adkins are all members of this commission. Additionally, perhaps as a sub-committee, the principles of Parallel Justice will be addressed, ie. all victims of crimes deserve justice.

We are very fortunate that, in our city, there are those who volunteer their time, expertise, and compassion to address the human needs of some members of our community. I am honored to offer my time and title of Mayor to these worthwhile and needed efforts. Again, thanks to those who make our City great in this way.

Another group of men and women in our community I thank are our Military Veterans and those currently serving, and their families. Thanks also to those who work locally to honor them. Some of our veterans need our help with a job and/or a place to live. Through the United States Conference of Mayors, I have been appointed co-chair of the Veteran's Affairs Task Force of the USCM. It is an honor to serve in this way as the USCM works with various veterans' efforts in Washington, D.C. Our Rochester Fire Department Battalion Chief and National Guard Colonel Eric Kerska at the last Veterans' Day service spoke of the Greatest Generation, but then asked, after praising today's veterans, "are we raising the next great generation?" A question we all can help answer.

My report would not be complete without commenting further on our ever increasing vibrant arts community. Obviously, the significant impact of Down By the Riverside Concerts and Thursdays on First and Third are not only great "happenings" and entertainment, but bring our community together in a most positive way. And we have "fests": Rochester; Winter; and Dancing for the Arts; Artgras and multiple offerings at Rochester Civic Theatre and the Rochester Art Center. And there are many other concerts held at Mayo Civic Center with the expectation for more. Creative Salon, C4 offers additional and alternative opportunities.

While I had reservations about the name of the awards honoring individuals and arts organizations - the Ardee Awards - the event demonstrated the number of extremely worthwhile arts "winners" in our community. There were no "losers". This new annual event will continue to showcase the wonderful arts we all enjoy. And what about the many individual artists, true entrepreneurs in their own way. I would like to have us, the City and/or developers, look into developing housing - live- work space - for local artists and those wishing to move to Rochester. The organization Artspace opens doors for artists and we may have a building(s) that could accommodate their mission: "to create, foster, and preserve affordable space for artists and arts organizations." Building better communities through the

Arts. This past October, Rochester, led by our own Poet Laureate, Jane Belau, hosted the first-of-its-kind event, six poets laureate from around the State of Minnesota to read original works on hope and healing at the Mayo Clinic. A discussion followed to plan for a state-wide poetry conference in Rochester during National Poetry Month - April. Local high schools will be involved.

2014 - What will be our other events besides DMC and becoming a Compassionate City? Council President has outlined some areas and matters of policy. A brief rundown of other "events" include:

- Pilot program for Latino students at Riverside School in collaboration with the Rochester Public Schools;
- Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce annual Rochester on Tour at the State Capital - March 11 always a great event;
- Annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks funding;
- The annual Litter Bit Better campaign, a very successful effort now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year;
- Arbor Day events including the planting of 10 trees at Goose Egg Park in honor of City of Rochester employees;
- Mayo Clinic's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary "Serving Humanity"; and,
- Highway 14 - 4 lanes from Dodge Center to Owatonna.

It has been an amazing and busy year! Certainly it's busy, busy here in Rochester, but also with the various organizations the City and the Mayor are members. Included are:

- League of Minnesota Cities
- Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities Board
  - o We will host their summer meeting
- National League of Cities
  - o Various Committees
- Mayor
  - o United States Conference of Mayors
    - Tourism, Arts, Parks, Entertainment & sports
    - Veterans' Affairs Task force
  - o Regional Council of Mayors
  - o Center for Transportation Studies
    - Executive Committee
  - o Minnesota State Arts Board

The City benefits by being members and involved in these various committees. Sharing of information and hearing of "Best practices" keeps us up to date with what's happening within the State and Nationally.

I am aware that Rochester is also recognized as a great city by these organizations and therefore is a valued participant.

An event I attended this year was "Empowerment Week," held in Birmingham, Alabama, September 11-15, 2013, commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement which followed the bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church. It was here that 4 little girls were killed while attending Sunday school on September 15, 1963. The US Conference of Mayors helped with some discussion panels that I was privileged to participate on. The events of "Empowerment Week" were life changing for me personally.

As I have done for my 11 years in office, I have tallied the number of events on my calendar. This past year, I counted 1427, the second highest ever. The average for these eleven years is 1324. "It is not a full-time job - it's a full-time joy!"

Thanks to my associate Donna Bussell for her work in representing the Mayor's Office to visitors, guests and staff. The Mayor's schedule can be and is challenging at times and she helps coordinate it requiring last minute changes at times. Thank you also to the wonderful administrative staff I am privileged to work with.

Thanks to my family and especially to my wife, Judy, who have supported me while I struggle at times to balance family and city. Her love and understanding are invaluable while I represent this great City.

Oh, and one final thing! I plan to run again for the position of Mayor this year. I believe I represent this City well; locally, state-wide, nationally, and on occasion internationally. I believe the legislative process and now being on the Destination Medical Center Corporation Board will be beneficial as we implement DMC over the next 4 years. I ask for the public's support.

Thank you and God Bless!

*Mayor Lucretia F. Bledsoe*