



CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT * CITY HALL * 100 STATE STREET * BELOIT, WI 53511
Office: 608/364-6614 * Fax: 608/364-6756

<http://www.ci.beloit.wi.us>

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State of the City Address – February 4, 2013
Charles M. Haynes, City Council President

Dedication, Determination, Persistence, and Patience

Introduction

Each year at this time the City Council President, in the State of the City Address, offers to all of us a summary of the year past, and the hopes for the future. I will not dwell on the details as Our City Manager will report on those later this month.

I will discuss philosophy and policy. This discussion will center on the principles that provide the high-level “why and how” that drive our actions today, and are what is needed for the future. To illustrate my points, I have titled this address “Dedication, Determination, Persistence and Patience”. These four virtues have given us the ability to achieve what success could be derived during our lethargic national recovery. Any community that lacks these four qualities is not likely to advance.

I intend to discuss each of our 2012 achievements in light of Determination, Dedication, Persistence, and Patience.

Dedication is the moral commitment to a principle.

The City and our private partners continue to be dedicated to developing and growing our economic base. Business retention and recruitment remain our most important priority. New victories are few but we have solid expansion at Kettle and Kerry, among others, to show for our efforts.

Determination is the stubbornness to push through in the face of obstacles.

Our community showed tremendous dedication and determination to improve our schools. The passing of an unprecedented 70-million-dollar referendum sent a clear message to the greater community and beyond that we will make our schools’ improvements a top priority.

Persistence is the quality of continuously pressing forward with long-term goals until completion.

Nearly a generation ago, civic partners (Beloit 2020 chief among them), Beloit College and the City began the renaissance of the city of Beloit. Our continued persistence has seen the completion of several important projects in our plan. It took nearly two decades to see all the Riverside Park improvements completed finally this year. In collaboration with the State of Wisconsin, we also completed the reconstruction of the Henry Avenue Bridge and renamed and dedicated it to one of our greatest partners and son of the City, Ken Hendricks.

Persistence paid off again, as after years of searching of a solution to the problem posed by the vacant Wagner building, Hendricks Development, in conjunction with the City, began transformation of the 300-block of East Grand Ave, appropriately renamed "The Phoenix building".

Many of the things we as a community want to do seem to take forever. This is where patience comes in.

Patience is the ability to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay.

Both Patience and Persistence took center stage when we worked through and entered into an intergovernmental agreement with the Ho-Chunk Nation. This was the next step to further our quest to successfully conclude the casino project.

The Hampton Inn took 4 years to finish, with the Greater Beloit Economic Development Corp. playing a major role in pushing the project through to completion.

Then there have been several causes that groups of residents have been advocating for many years: the City Dog Park and the backyard chicken ordinance were both finalized in 2012.

We all know that relations with our neighbors, the Town of Beloit, Town of Turtle and the City of Janesville have not always been constructive. This year has seen the most amazing turn-around in our relations with the neighboring communities, with joint meetings and staff laying the groundwork for equitable cooperation on a scale unthinkable a few years ago. We will work for ongoing improvement in the years ahead.

We continued to work with Northstar Radioisotopes to finalize their project.

The City has looked for new ways to show competitive advantage in economic development. Knowing that we needed to be even more responsive and flexible we took the painful step of buying out our long-term partners in the Gateway, MLG.

2012 was a year where all victories were paid for by the toil of the preceding years.

Focus for 2013

2013 promises to bring its own challenges. The 2012 budget balanced cleanly based on the fiscal discipline and resolve of the prior year. The 2013 budget will hinge on a State Biennial Budget that we have not yet seen but is unlikely to leave shared revenue at the present levels.

We must encourage interested residents to help us find ways to ensure the continued availability of amenities they enjoy. The pool and golf course, among others, could be benefitted by "Friends of" groups.

While we have handled the bulk of our Big Old Building problems such as the former Mall and the old K-Mart building, which will soon see a new Piggly-Wiggly store, the former Kerry building at West Grand is looming as an emerging challenge. Gutted by an unscrupulous investor who left the carcass standing, it threatens to mar the city center. I challenge staff, myself and my colleagues to come up with a workable solution.

I firmly believe that improving our local economy is the foundation for improving the lives of our residents. Many of our residents still need support, however. While the City has no direct role in this support, we can coordinate with supporting agencies.

I will finish by reminding us all that while Beloit's recent history has been challenging, Dedication, Determination, Persistence and Patience have moved us forward and will continue to do so.