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**STATE OF THE CITY – February 17, 2014**  
**Charles M. Haynes, City Council President**

Persistent Vision 2014

It is time again for the State of the City address. As in previous years, the City Manager will provide more detailed overview and financial reports later in the year. I will provide a high-level overview of the policy and philosophy.

I do not intend to dwell on things that we as a city do not have direct control over, such as our unemployment rate and education of our workforce, nor do I intend to take credit for a lowered crime rate. That would be just like taking credit for the sun shining or taking the blame for rain and snow. Instead, I will focus on what we can do.

One of the great hallmarks of the resurgent City of Beloit has been the vision of our leaders and the persistence of successive leaders in applying that vision to the action of our governing bodies.

The last 12 months have been especially filled with choices for the City between adhering to our shared vision, or giving into expediency.

We have had to decide whether to grasp for marginal and questionable development or to hold to our principles and wait for better uses.

We have faced the fear of the unknown and had to reaffirm to ourselves that a resurgent Beloit was worth the risk.

Do we look for new ways to nimbly and aggressively position ourselves to take advantage of the best opportunities or do we retrench?

I am pleased to say that we have chosen to stay the course.

When a company wanted to place a very marginal business in the former lumberyard on Ford Lane, we held out for better. Later, we were rewarded as the property was sold to a company that intends to build a hotel on the site.

The city took opportunity to protect our water resources with a new well head protection ordinance.

When Hendricks Development began to move forward with extensive new development at the Beloit Ironworks, we were able to secure grant funding to support this important redevelopment work.

Taking advantage of opportunities like these requires flexibility.

After ending our association with MLG, the city offered a general brokerage agreement to provide more avenues for opportunities to come our way. The purchase of the Hextor-Long parcels in the Gateway at an advantageous price gave us additional flexibility to offer companies high-quality sites for their facilities.

Finally, when the time came to place our imprint on the I90/39 interchange reconstruction, which is the largest infrastructure project in our area for the next few decades, we stood for our vision and supported adding a connection from Milwaukee Road into the Gateway, setting the stage for growth along this corridor.

Unfortunately, some promising projects, such as the Casino and the North Star Radioisotope facility, do seem to be taking longer than we would like. The Phoenix building, however, should be completed by this spring and is already a polished jewel in our crown.

There are significant challenges ongoing and ahead. Our budget remains tight. Revenue is stagnant and inflation is adding considerable pressure to our service delivery. The drop in equalized value has driven the tax rate up just to produce the same revenue. This presents challenges to business recruitment.

We still have a Big Old Building problem in the city. 946 Park Avenue is a thorn in the College Park neighborhood's side and we will have to find a solution. 200 West Grand Avenue continues to blight that corner of downtown.

These are problems where persistence and inventiveness will provide a solution to fulfilling our vision for Beloit.