

ANNUAL STATE OF THE TOWN REPORT

The fiscal year ended June 30, 2010 was a good year for the Town of Signal Mountain in spite of the many challenges faced by our staff. A number of significant events occurred: We repealed the SROZ and accepted the donation of our Mountain Arts Community Center from Hamilton County and the Board of Education. We supported the rezoning of the former Signal Mountain Middle School property with reasonable protections for the neighborhood and witnessed its re-development into a business center and athletic complex. We worked to ensure that Taft Highway up the mountain would be on TDOT's radar screen for repairs and improvement, received transportation grants and ARRA funds for completion of sidewalks on James; the repaving of sections of James Boulevard and North Palisades drive; the replacement and improvement of the traffic signal; and, for the installation of energy efficient upgrades at the MACC.

We developed an updated and improved Board Ordinance and a new town website thanks to Susan Robertson, converted our capital projects fund into a new vehicle replacement fund, reached new franchise agreements with EPB and Comcast, received final recommendations from the Clean Streams Task Force led by Annette Allen, and formed a new Transportation sub-committee to study future needs within the town. We reaffirmed our embrace of backyard chickens, we continued the ban on guns in our public parks, and we considered and rejected traffic cameras. Finally, we maintained our current property tax rate without reducing services and we considered and rejected a referendum to increase local option sales taxes.

We ended the year with a balanced budget, expenses below our expectations and no big surprises. We lowered our debt and witnessed improvements in the efficiency of our departments thanks to Town Manager Honna Rogers, who celebrated her second full year with us last March. Under her leadership, the departments have worked together seamlessly. As a result, the quality and the efficiency of the services we provide continue to improve.

Each department carried a considerable load in the last fiscal year.

Financial Performance:

- We reduced the principal on the Town's school-related loan from \$4.8 million to \$4.2 million by making an additional payment and we continued to focus on the early retirement of the debt.
- We renewed our agreement with Orange Grove for operation of the Recycle Center.
- We began the 2009-2010 fiscal year with a general fund balance of \$4,105,000 and ended with a strong general fund balance of \$4,237,000. The increase in fund balance by year-end reflects the net effect of the additional school loan principal payment, savings on the loan's interest costs, higher than expected Hall income tax and state sales tax receipts, timing of the MACC roof repairs and frugal spending by each of our department heads.

Employee Management: We implemented quarterly supervisor training to ensure that our key people are among the best trained in local government.

- We continued our employee wellness program with frequent meetings, distributing monthly handouts and placing information in work areas.
- In addition, we decreased monthly premiums in employee health insurance by moving to a higher deductible reimbursement plan.

Our Police Department:

- Responded to 2279 incidents including 81 arrests.
- Conducted 720 hours of training for new officers, well in excess of state requirements.
- Logged an impressive 1069 additional hours in our training program.
- Received a traffic safety grant of over \$20,000 from the Governor's Highway Safety Office. These funds were used to pay overtime for traffic enforcement and to purchase speed reduction equipment.
- Moreover, we continued to be among the best-trained and strongest police departments in the region with all our officers (POST) certified by the TN Peace Officer's Standards and Training Commission.

Our Fire Department:

- Responded to 677 incidents during the year, 56% of which were medical or rescue-related.
- Logged over 7515 hours in training, for an average of 327 hours per person.
- We ensured that all Department members were trained as first responders and acquired certification as Level 2 Firefighters.
- Passed the State Firefighting audit with no deficiencies.

- We ensured the safety of our residents by maintaining an ISO rating of 5.
- Applied for a federal grant for a new fire engine.
- All personnel were certified as Haz-Mat Operators.
- And finally, we received a federal homeland security grant to upgrade our portable radios

The Public Works Department:

- Spent 13,000 hours on sanitation services such as curbside garbage collection, leaf and brush pickup and maintenance of Town rights-of-way.
- Supported 13,690 visits to our transfer station.
- Spent 415 hours salting and removing snow from Town streets, assisted TDOT with snow removal on Taft Highway and the front of the mountain, and assisted the County/HCDE with clearing roads in the school zones.
- Performed pavement cuts, pothole filling, and crack sealing to prepare for street paving.
- Kept 2,047,862 pounds of recyclable material out of the landfill, saving the Town money despite the downturn in scrap material prices.
- Began engineering for several major projects: upgrading the traffic signal to LED lighting; paving 3.6 miles of streets using ARRA funds; installing additional guardrail along North Palisades and over 3600 feet of sidewalk along James Boulevard using Transportation Enhancement Grant funds.
- We secured a commitment of funds in the Transportation Improvement Plan for three projects: a bike and pedestrian path along Taft Highway from Rolling Way to Albert Rd; rehabilitation of the concrete portion of James Blvd; and

rehabilitation of sidewalks in Old Town making them ADA compliant.

The Building and Stormwater Department:

- Issued building permits for a combination of remodeling and new construction valued at over \$6,098,855.
- Conducted 1,653 building inspections.
- Cooperated and provided assistance to the WWTA in support of their aggressive sewer relining and private service lateral programs.
- Monitored water quality regularly and reported improvement.

Our Water Department:

- Responded to 1,067 work orders.
- Read 14,266 water meters and repaired 16 major leaks and break in Town lines.
- Responded to 299 Tennessee One-Calls.
- Ensured the quality of our water supply through preventive maintenance and operational efficiency at the lowest cost possible.
- Supported our tank maintenance program.

The Recreation Department:

- Witnessed an increase in participation in all programs.
- Served well over 1,000 people in organized sports, summer camps, and at the Town pool.
- Added Lacrosse under the Signal Mountain Recreation umbrella.
- Maintained the gym for organized and free play for countless kids and adults.

- Rebuilt the sun deck at the pool.
- We enhanced services and, in general, lowered costs.

Our Library:

- Increased membership by 426 to serve over 4,300 people.
- Increased average circulation to almost 6000 items per month.
- Increased the catalogue by almost 2,000 materials (books, books on CD and movies).
- Continued to conduct high-quality special programs for children and adults.
- Received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- Installed Wi-Fi and new carpeting.
- Received gifts from interested citizens and Friends of the Library for benches and tables for the patio area; vintage rugs; a portrait of Emma Bell Miles; and six incredible model ships with display cases.

The Mountain Arts Community Center

- Provided over 510 people with a variety of classes, including summer camps, in spite of the many facility-related challenges.
- Relocated raccoons, installed a new roof, and completed other repairs.
- Upgraded the MACC facility to host receptions and parties with a working kitchen, permission to serve alcohol at private receptions, and other improvements.
- Awarded \$100,000 ARRA Grant for Energy Efficiency.

- Received donations from many citizens to help sponsor a Youth String Camp utilizing the skills of Robert Bernhardt and Fletcher Bright.

Finally, the 2009-2010 fiscal year was marked by significant community involvement. At least 87 citizens volunteered on Town advisory boards and commissions ranging from Planning, Design Review, Zoning and Appeals, Clean Streams, Transportation, Personnel, Recreation, Parks, Tree Board, and others.

Looking ahead to fiscal year 2010-2011, we begin with strong general fund reserves and with budgeted revenues and expenditures of \$6.1 million. Budgeted amounts include \$700,000 in loan-based and other funding for the newly formed vehicle replacement plan, which will ease the burden of funding automobile and capital equipment purchases in future years.

As we move toward the conclusion of this fiscal year, we hope to see completed or in progress the following long-awaited projects:

- Continue our work with WWTA and TDEC to end the sewer moratorium.
- Installation of the new LED traffic signal with turn arrows for Palisades and Mississippi as well as several miles of paving.
- Sidewalks along James Boulevard.
- Engineering for Transportation Improvement Fund projects including remediation of the concrete portion of James Boulevard in Old Town.
- Improved water quality as the WWTA works on its Private Service Lateral Program to control the inflow and infiltration

of storm water into sewer lines, and we encourage everyone's cooperation with WWTA throughout this project.

- Phase 2 of improvements to replace 60-year-old water lines on Balmoral and Palisades Roads.
- A positive resolution of the litigation involving Fox Run and Windtree and finalization of the annexation of them into the town.
- The final revision and updating of the town's commercial design standards, sign ordinance, subdivision regulations, and zoning ordinance.
- A commercial land use plan, town-wide sewer plan, and others to maintain and plan for sustainable infrastructure and responsible growth.
- Re-siding of town hall and replacement of windows with failed seals.
- Fire safety enhancements and repairs at the MACC.
- Study options for replacement of our outdated water meters with automated meters.
- Development of a 5 year capital plan
- Expanded use of recycling containers at public events
- Plans for the replacement of our Public Works garage.
- Study the efficacy of establishing fees for services provided under our mutual aid agreements.

Our 2010-2011 fiscal year will be one of significant challenges, not the least of which is our economy. Many of our public buildings, facilities, and equipment are in need of repair or replacement and there are always unforeseen problems and cost---think Racoons. However, we are prepared to meet the challenges in this and future years. The success of our community has always

been marked by strong citizen involvement in local government, town meetings, and community service. It is through this sense of community that the Town has and will continue to thrive.

The Town Council would like to thank our employees for their on-going work to improve services and lower costs and our many volunteers for their countless hours of community service.

Finally, after four years, this council will end its service together in just a few short weeks. We have accomplished a lot as a team and it has been a privilege and a pleasure to work and serve with each of you. Thank you.

Bill Lusk, Mayor
Town of Signal Mountain