

Well, here we are once again together to discuss where we are as a community. Let me first be sure to thank Ben Berthelot, Becky Lalumia, Becky Perret and Dee Stanley for their help in putting this together. It's never easy for me and it's truly a team effort.

Each year I ask a group to sit up here with me. Usually, it has been elected officials from throughout Lafayette Parish and one year it was the directors of the LCG Departments. Last year the new council was up here representing an historic change, with 8 out of 9 new councilmen taking office. It is now a completely new group of councilmen, or should I say councilpersons. Today, I took a slightly different approach. Since I often say that it takes a complete community to make a great community, you see at the head table some of the many different entities represented that play a major role in shaping what we are and where we are going.

It takes all segments of a community participating and working together to make a community great. And while we couldn't get every segment represented at the head table, we do have a good mix of broad based, big picture organizations.

**Rob Guidry** with The Chamber of Commerce represents the interests of the private sector. The chamber works closely with government to find ways to make Lafayette more attractive to business and the people that work in them. The Chamber works regionally.

**Gregg Gothreaux** is representing LEDA and is that blend of Government and the private sector. Gregg needs the chamber to be successful so he has a good product to show prospects, and LEDA also works regionally.

**Dr. Joe Savoie** - represents higher education and the university that plays such a huge role in why a business or family might want to locate in Acadiana . He's also my fraternity brother.

**Mike Michot** is here representing our regional legislative delegation working together at the state level on our behalf.

**Carl LaCombe** -As president of the Lafayette Parish School Board, Carl represents K thru 12 public education.

**Margaret Trahan**- With United Way represents that important element in our community, the non profits throughout our region.

**Purvis Morrison**- Represents the council that we all need to continue to work together with an eye towards the future.

**Gerald Breaux**- Represents Tourism which is so important to our economy and works regionally.

**Paul Segura**- Represents the airport that is also an extremely important economic development driver for all of Acadiana.

**Cherry and Steve May** Represent the media...**despite Today's poor excuse for a cover story.**

Why are these people and organizations up here?

Because, while many communities have factions that work against each other, I wanted you to know that all of us up here work very well together. Any one of us can call the other to discuss an issue, and in fact do, on a regular basis. We are all on the same team and we are all working toward the same goal.

You don't see them up here today, but our equal partners include Private Education, our Technical & Community colleges which are so important for our workforce development, our Churches, The Arts and Culture community, our Medical community, as well as many great organizations like the Upper Lafayette Business Foundation, The Board of Realtors, Home Builders, The Black Chamber of Commerce, and others.

So, like a good running car, our community needs for all of its parts to be working in unison.

Otherwise we will simply have a good community and everyone knows that the #1 enemy of great is good.

As we always do, let's start with looking back a little, when we began in 2004. I looked back at campaign promises made. I promised to open up government; promised to be accessible; promised to run government with business principles and we have lived up to those promises.

I promised to “get out of the box” to find ways to keep our young people from having to leave our area to find jobs. We took on powerful companies at obvious political risk, and because you trusted our motives and our plan, Lafayette is definitely catapulting into the future in a way that I believe has changed our course and will make Lafayette and all of Acadiana a better place than it would have been 25 years from now.

But the number one thing I promised was to put the people of Lafayette ahead of personal politics.

Every decision we have made has been based on how it will affect Lafayette in the future. We fought multi-billion dollar companies starting just months into a first term, against the advice of many.

We gave you an opportunity to pay for much needed road and infrastructure improvements, by allowing you to vote for a tax. Had it passed we would be working on the infrastructure that would have shaped Lafayette for the next 25 to 50 years. Unfortunately, by my way of looking at things, we are beginning to fall behind and lose our edge.

And, I will say it once again, that a sales tax is still the best, and in fact, the only answer to our infrastructure needs.

Let's talk about the courthouse. Since Lafayette Parish was created in 1823 by the Louisiana Legislature, we have had 5 courthouses. The current courthouse was built in 1965 when our population was 96,000. Today that same building is serving over 200,000 people. Public records, some over 180 years old, along with our history are stored in that outdated building. To put things in perspective, when it was built, copy machines were hand cranked, and personal computers did not exist.

In fact, they thought asbestos was a great product back then. I say again, that I think it is immoral that we have people working in that building and that we expect it to somehow do what no courthouse in history has done which is to be useful beyond its useable life. Thank goodness our hospitals don't run like we expect government to run. The next time a sales tax is voted on, it should include the courthouse.

It breaks my heart to see this progressive community fall behind because we want to wait for someone else to build our roads. I hate seeing us lose our edge as we compete in a global economy to attract the businesses that will employ our citizens. We have lost 2½ years and obviously we will lose more time before we finally come to the realization that only we can influence the future by taking control of our own destiny.

So, if you want a “Stimulus” plan, that will circulate \$600M+ in Lafayette Parish and actually put people to work and pay them salaries to buy homes and cars, as well as spend in our stores and restaurants, well, you know how to do it. We can build it, rather than waiting on Washington.

But I digress. Today, we are implementing our FTTP initiative. It's going to change how you watch TV.

This is what you will see when you turn on your television. Headline news; Weather; and more.

I have asked that we put the council agenda as well as the school board agenda on there for you as well, as just another way to make government more accessible to you. That's just the consumer side of this. More importantly is what can it do for business?

We will soon start setting up business and commerce meetings around town to see what we can do to be sure we use this infrastructure to help our local businesses be competitive and for us to attract good, clean jobs to Lafayette.

We continue to work with our neighboring cities and parishes on regional issues so that Acadiana's needs are met. As budgets get tighter, we need to look for ways to share services and reduce costs.

Last year, I told you we would settle the fire and police lawsuit. We did negotiate a settlement and I thank the council for approving it.

We have taken over Kaliste Saloom Road from the state and we are working with our delegation to widen the section from Ambassador Caffery to Hwy 733 as soon as possible.

Don't forget, the state had projected this for construction around 2028. We are taking our future into our own hands and we will not wait for the state to control our destiny.

## **CRIME**

Two years ago, at this event, I announced our "Safe Lafayette" initiative. We had 11 murders in 2008, down 27% from 2007. The number of rapes increased slightly from 68 to 73.

Burglary increased by less than 1%, but we were down in every other crime category, including robbery, assault, theft and auto theft.

How do we stay ahead of the criminals, keeping our community safe?

As our community grows and prospers, the need to expand the ranks of our police department remains a top priority. Recruiting efforts have been highly successful, and actually resulted in our reaching zero vacancies at one point during the year.

In response to this need to grow the department, I asked the council to authorize 18 more police officer positions and am happy to say that they said yes.

The establishment of a 4<sup>th</sup> precinct in the northeast portion of the city has resulted in a more efficient delivery of services within the Patrol Division. This large area was previously part of precinct #1, which generated nearly 50% of all calls to the police department.

Now that area has been split, so that police officers are better able to deal with issues unique to those neighborhoods.

The Safe Schools Program came about as a result of our Safe Lafayette initiative. Today, we have 8 police officers on middle and high school campuses within the city. In addition to providing highly visible security, these “School Resource Officers” work with faculty and staff to mentor and counsel students. And they are also good recruiters of future officers. The School Resource Officers are responsible for all police actions on their campuses, which allow regular officers in those districts to spend more time on proactive patrol. The school board provides part of the funding for the deployment of these School Resource Officers. This is just one way that we are being proactive to prevent problems before they ever start.

## **Parks and Recreation**

This past year, a concerned citizen called my office to report that we had parks and recreation employees cutting grass on private property with our equipment in a neighboring parish. We moved quickly and got back our tractor and other stolen equipment. We also fired and arrested those involved. We will not tolerate anyone in this government stealing from the taxpayers of this community and I promise you we will continue to take those kinds of tips seriously. To the lady that made the call, I say thank you, and I hope you realize that it was worth the effort.

Last year I announced an exploration into better ways to set up and fund our parks and recreation. As expected, the committee found that a model along the lines of BREC in Baton Rouge was the way to go. We could combine our parks and recreation along with our museums and get them out of direct government control to have it run more efficiently.

However, this can only be done with a funding mechanism which we don't currently have and I believe now is clearly not the time to seek a new property tax to fund such a progressive initiative.

### **I-49**

We had a great meeting at the Washington Mardi Gras again this year. We asked six of our delegation to meet with a handful of us that included the chamber of commerce and LEDA. The meeting lasted over an hour, with Senator David Vitter, Congressman Charlie Melancon and Congressman Steve Scalise able to make it in person, while Congressman Charles Boustany and Senator Mary Landrieu were unable to attend but did send representatives.

I will tell you right now that I-49 has two good friends, Senator David Vitter and Congressman Charles Boustany. They are our best if not only hope in Washington for I-49.

I would like to thank both of them for all of their help and continued support. We will continue to work to bring the others on board and would ask that if any of you have their ear, to call them and make the case. But why is it important? For Lafayette, it would have a more significant impact on traffic than anything else we could do. Of course hurricane evacuation is critical if your family's lives are at stake. But did you realize that 30% of America's supply of oil travels in that corridor? That is why Dr. Kam Movassaghi and the chamber are calling it America's Energy Corridor. How could anyone not want billions of dollars spent in their area on a legitimate federal project? We were told that the stimulus bill was to build infrastructure. I say build it!

### **Economic Development**

We continue to work on what I think is the most important thing you want us to do and that is to attract business to Lafayette. Just watch the news from around the country if you don't agree how important it is.

When you suddenly find yourself without a job, everything else seems pretty minor.

It's obvious that we have seen a boom in hotel construction in the past couple of years. There are 600 more rooms on the books, increasing our numbers by 10%. Hotel receipts have increased 77% over the last five years. And 2008, through November, was 15% ahead of 2007! Clearly, hoteliers see Lafayette as a viable market to grow and expand their business.

One of the things Lafayette is lacking is a 4 or 5 star hotel that will take care of high end travelers as well as provide convention space.

We believe Lafayette is ready for one and a recent study proves we are right. As usual, we are working alongside LEDA to try to make this happen.

Our Lafayette Entertainment Initiative, with some of the funding coming from LEDA and LCVC continues to gain momentum. This year we have been given a matching grant from the state to take the lead for Louisiana at the Cannes Film Festival. The state recognizes our relationship with France that was enhanced by our Marquis de Lafayette work in 2007. Our efforts are recognized by many around the state and we are optimistic that they will continue to produce jobs for our community. We have gone from almost zero to 121 people working in the industry. Oh, and by the way we could use a few sponsors to help us match the state grant so if you're interested, I'll be available.

Another important part of our economy is arts and culture. Today with the help of our delegation, this \$15.4 million Phase 2 of the Acadiana Center for the Arts is now becoming a reality and at virtually no cost to parish citizens. With its HD Video projection and broadcast

capability, flexible floor plan and acoustics, and more intimate seating capacity, the theatre will become a cornerstone in the next phase of development for the Lafayette Entertainment Initiative.

But there is more. With all the negatives we are bombarded with; let's look at some other positives. You expect your mayor to try and paint a rosy picture, but let's ignore that and look at the real world and real people that believe in Lafayette.

We have all heard about the new hospital Lourdes is building on Ambassador Caffery, at \$600,000 it is the largest building permit in Lafayette's history. And, Lafayette General is doing a major remodel and upgrade in The Oil Center that will result in \$75M to \$100M spent over the next few years. There is Cross Point Center on Pont Des Mouton a mixed residential/commercial development that includes a hotel.

Four new hotels under construction; Expansion of Louisiana Avenue Shopping Center; \$30M of medical offices (new and renovations) presently under construction; and a \$16M mixed residential/commercial use development at the Main Street Annex in River Ranch.

These are obviously people that are confident in the future of Lafayette and are putting their hard earned money where their mouth is. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their confidence in the future of, and for what they are doing for Lafayette.

That is true economic development and should give us all reason to be optimistic about the future.

### **ACCOLADES**

We hear politicians tell us how terrible Louisiana ranks on all the good lists. It is kind of like watching the national news and letting it influence your thinking.

So while you hear about Louisiana, let me tell you about the Crown Jewel of Louisiana that proves it's not as bad as you might think. You have heard some of this before but it cannot be said often enough.

Top 10 Places for the creative class, based in part on our commitment to technology - *Southern Business and Development Magazine, April 2008*

Top 10 Innovative Markets for our efforts in nurturing and attracting innovation-driven industry and business – *Southern Business and Development Magazine, April 2008*

Top 50 best places to work and play, The 50 next great adventure/innovation towns (National Geographic)

#1 city in America in New Employment Outlook – *Manpower, December 2008*

42nd Best City to do Business Based on job creation, job center diversity and other business concerns– *Inc. Magazine, July 2008*

Milken Institute's Best Cities – Lafayette ranked 14<sup>th</sup>  
Best Performing Large Metro City in the nation.

Cited job growth (12<sup>th</sup>), Salary Growth (1<sup>st</sup>), and  
high-tech GDP growth (29<sup>th</sup>).

Top 5 in Quality of Life, among all North American  
cities with populations less than 500,000 – *fDi*  
*Magazine, April 2007*

We are a Hot City for Entrepreneurs – we ranked  
22<sup>nd</sup>; and are the 6<sup>th</sup> Best City for Relocating  
Families; many more

What makes many of these recognitions exciting to me is that several mention our FTTP initiative. I don't think we would have received some of them had we not pursued it.

Retail Sales On The Rise – For the third year in a row, annual retail sales in Lafayette Parish topped \$5 billion. The 2007 total was more than 5% higher than 2006 and the 2008 year end total is now the highest on record.

Last March I testified before congress about our fiber. I was able to look two dozen congressmen in the eye and say that what we are going to have in Lafayette they wouldn't have 20 or 25 years from now, that's how far ahead of the curve that I think we are.

Geoff Daily who publishes an online technology magazine says he believes the next generation of the internet is being created right here in Lafayette.

He recognizes what people are doing here yet we often don't.

Just think how lucky we are when compared to cities all over America that are in terrible shape right now, and don't have all of this to build on. I just wanted you to know that we are in a very good position and are lucky to live in the best 200 miles in America.

**Now let's look towards the future.**

Short of true consolidation, I intend to bring my proposed *annexation plan* to every town in Lafayette Parish and hope to reach an agreement this year so that we can all relax as it relates to annexations. Too often, towns annex an area just to prevent another town from getting it. This often results in municipalities biting off more than they can chew, and we have already begun discussions on that issue.

As a continuing part of the “Safe Lafayette” initiative, I plan to ask the council to fund specific precinct locations, further connecting officers with the people of Lafayette.

## **HORSE FARM**

### **CITY OF LAFAYETTE INFRASTRUCTURE**

If the bond market makes it possible, we will soon sell more than 65-million dollars in city sales-tax bonds to fund some important projects that are ready for construction. Later this year, we could be prepared to begin major drainage improvements to Coulee Ile Des Cannes, Sunbeam Coulee, West Farrell outfall, and McKinley Street.

We are also ready to go with Louisiana Avenue extension beyond Butcher Switch, all the way to Gloria Switch Road as part of this plan.

Other “traffic-movers” are included as well, like the extension and 4-laning of the Robley Drive-Duhon corridor, North St. Antoine St. extension, East Pont Des Mouton widening, and Eraste Landry Road widening. Our budget also includes additional funding to “jump-start” the South College Bridge project over the Vermilion River. The completion of the next phase of Streetscape downtown would also be funded.

## **PARISH BOND PROPOSAL**

For the first time in a long time we have an opportunity to do some real work in the unincorporated areas of our parish. CFO Becky Lalumia came to us last year and showed us a way to bond out some money without, I repeat WITHOUT raising taxes. This is an existing tax that was already authorized by Lafayette Parish voters to pay off bonds. There has been some growth due to Lafayette’s economy. We can take that additional income and bond it for capital projects.

These roads are roads that our engineers have said are the most critical in our parish. In fact they are beyond simple overlay. They now must be reconstructed as they are turning into the gravel roads they once were.

These are roads that have not been maintained for 40 years while they should be overlaid about every 15 years. And, they have been picked by the engineers, not the politicians. I would ask that you support this initiative by going to the polls on April 4<sup>th</sup> and simply giving us your permission to borrow the money to do the work; again, without increasing your taxes. And, I call on the media to do your job to educate the community on this important issue.

Are we satisfied? Is Lafayette clean enough? Green enough? Are we satisfied with being 4<sup>th</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup>? Do we sit back now that fiber is being deployed and say we are ok with where we are? I say absolutely not.

I came into this office promising to raise the bar and I will never think we have achieved all we can. I love it that visitors to Lafayette think we are such a clean city, yet we don't feel that way. I love it when I hear business people being impatient about what we can do with fiber; a conversation that they couldn't even broach in most any other city in America. We have high expectations and that is what I want to hear from the people of this city and parish. With all the accolades we have received, are we afraid to face the realities of making sure that we are visibly a city on the move? We haven't built a new public high school in 40 years. We have a courthouse in shameful condition that we have outgrown. We have a jail that is too small for our parish's growing needs. Obviously, our roads need to be wider and longer and we need more of them.

But we only need to do this if we want to continue to receive the recognition from around the country and the world for the quality of life that we are so fortunate to enjoy. We don't need to discuss any of this if we are satisfied with resting on our laurels.

We *do* need to continue to raise the bar. You've heard me say this before, but I am going to say it again. Does Lafayette want to be the Austin of Louisiana?

That isn't a goal, that's just being satisfied with what another place already is. I won't be satisfied until I hear that Austin wants to be the Lafayette of Texas, and neither should you!

All of Acadiana needs for Lafayette to be successful. As the largest city in southwestern Louisiana, We have a responsibility to do the things others cannot, such as having a state of the art performing arts center.

I've always considered part of my job description to be Lafayette's number one salesman...but, I don't have my head buried in the sand.

I know that things have us concerned and the national news has an effect on decisions we make locally.

That's why I felt this self-evaluation, a report card of sorts was so important now.

That's why I will do everything I can to work with this entire team as equal partners, to help us be the best we can be. To our business community I hope that you are able to stretch it as far as possible. We know that this downturn in the economy is a temporary, "bump in the road." Please do what you can to keep your employees working through this. I am not asking anyone to jeopardize their company because we need you to remain as healthy and as profitable as you possibly can be, because we want you to be around once we start emerging from this downturn.

At the first meeting of the council, I asked them to make decisions based on how they wanted Lafayette to look 25 years from now; to make decisions as visionaries. Today I ask you the people of Lafayette, “What do YOU want Lafayette to look like 25 years from now, and more importantly, what are you willing to do about it?”