

“THE FIRST 150 DAYS AND INTO THE FUTURE”

August 14th, 2008, 3PM, Ilfeld Auditorium



WELCOME

On March 4th, the people of Las Vegas **voted for change**. It presented a great opportunity to provide a turning point – for the way city government is to operate. I’d like to thank you... for allowing me to lead this effort.

Over the past eleven years as I served as a city councilman, I always felt, that the city was not moving in a progressive manner. In a way to identify the problems and to collectively participate in developing solutions. During my campaign for the office of mayor, the message was clear; the people of Las Vegas wanted NEW LEADERSHIP and NEW DIRECTION. And the guiding principle of my campaign, my slogan, “**beholden to no one, but to the citizens of Las Vegas**”, this will be the guiding principles of my administration.

Since March, management assessments were conducted on the state of the city. And in the search of a foundation – we learned that one did not exist. No plans. No goals. No objectives. No evaluations. With that, we undertook the efforts to develop a City Budget with department input and most importantly, with public input.

We also initiated a Strategic Plan for the City of Las Vegas, something that I never saw during the past decade. The voters of Las Vegas expected something more, and I really believe it is the most importing guiding light of any governmental entity and that is, “**open and transparent government.**” Thank you, Dr. Caballero, City Attorney, and council members, for your support in these efforts.

We have new leadership and a new direction for the City of Las Vegas. This afternoon I want to talk about the major problems we face as a city and some possible, yet viable, solutions to improve our community.

I am proud to present you, the State of the City, now ...and into the future.

In the past, Las Vegas faced many problems, not only with the Natural Gas Issue, but also with Water, Economic Development, and the city’s budget and with Public Safety.

NATURAL GAS

This may have been the most *emotional and critical* issue faced in recent times. We have heard citizens speak of having to choose between medications, food and heating their homes. Going door to door during the election, I visited with many families, and listened to their hardship. It is very sad, when you hear of the elderly who live on a fixed income, talk about how their heating bills skyrocketed. And the most heartfelt stories, come from those who live below the poverty level, but are willing to adjust their quality of life, just to make ends meet.

Some city employees have told me, about both the struggles of the young and the old, standing in line weeping as they plead to come up with a plan to pay their high winter gas bills.

Under my administration, and with the help of the city council, we have lowered the Natural Gas Administrative Fee to 9% ... **and we plan to lower it again.**

I created a Finance and Audit committee that will work along with the Utility Committee, to review the administrative fees charged by all utilities and to make recommendations to the council for a fair and equitable rate. They will also work to find ways to improve the billing process. Like many cities, large and small, we are working on a voluntary billing process that will average the bill over the whole year.

WATER IS OUR BIGGEST ISSUE, and for as long as I can remember, WATER has been a long debated and hotly contested topic. I never saw any good faith efforts to work “hand-in-hand” with the stakeholders until recently.

This summer, meetings were held with the Las Vegas Water Board, the Storrie Project Water Users Association, and the Rio Gallinas Acequia Association, and we have all agreed, to focus on the solutions and to set aside long-standing and expensive litigation to achieve our common goal.

This is about people before politics.

Together we agreed that instead of spending so much money on attorneys, fighting each other, we should spend our time and money on solutions that benefit all of us. To work on efforts that produces positive results, with a win-win solution.

As a result of our opening our lines of communications and listening to all stakeholders share their concerns, and their suggestions, we initiated a Memorandum of Agreement, to show... that collective we stand as a united front and to seek and obtain funding from state and federal sources for water projects, to assist in better water management and conservation efforts.

At the June 19th community water meeting, a vision was made public. A vision that clearly aimed - to help the community and stakeholders address the water problem.

The **Gallinas Hydroelectric Project** went from a dream, to the first steps of becoming reality. This ambitious project includes a multipurpose dam in the Gallinas Canyon to help manage our water resource and to create green and clean energy.

This dam - has a number of benefits; 1) capable to hold 12,000 acre feet of water storage, 2) to become a water banking facility for the acequias, 3) to produce electricity, 4) to serve as a water supply for firefighting in the watershed, and 5) a starting point for a modern conveyance and distribution system to deliver water when and where it is needed.

In June, mayor pro-tem Feldman and myself, “broke out of the vacuum” and took a trip to Washington DC, to present the Memorandum of Agreement to our federal delegation and to request funding for various projects. When Councilman Feldman made the presentation of the Gallinas Hydroelectric project, the project caught the attention of our New Mexico Congressional Delegation, the USDA, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

I am proud to announce, that all five members of our federal delegation have agreed to move forward and this project and it has been approved for research. They will guide us in seeking funding sources. We will follow up and not give up.

We have created, a Green and Clean, Alternative Energy Committee. One that will work “hand in hand” with the utility department, solid waste department and state and federal agencies, to identify opportunities for the City of Las Vegas.

We need to protect our beautiful environment. We need to protect our natural resources. The State of New Mexico is investing in alternative energy like, wind power, solar power, and biofuels. The City of Las Vegas, can ...*do the same*.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Public Safety is an issue that comes up everyday.

You have called me; you have written to me; you visited with me in restaurants, and visited with me at my home and on the streets; **and I am listening.**

There is, an interesting quote on the front of a federal building in Washington, D.C., that reads; “Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society.” Think about that for a minute – “*taxes are what we pay for a civilized society*”.

In terms of public safety, gradual neglect has led to a degree of disregard of basic laws which leads to unacceptable behavior or actions, becoming routine. We need to change that, for the benefit of everyone in our city.

Your taxes pay for city services. The largest part of a city’s budget is public safety. And Public Safety is much broader than the Police and the Fire Departments. It ranges from the roads that contain pot holes, signs that are not enforced, sidewalks that are not complete, all the way to the end, of the judicial process.

And.... I do not need to tell you about the condition of our roads and sidewalks.

When tourist visit Las Vegas, or when friends from other cities come to visit you in Las Vegas, first impressions make a lasting impression. Graffiti, fallen buildings, and cars racing up and down streets and not abiding to posted signs, it creates an image that we don’t agree with.

We need to do more, to make our community safe and to make Las Vegas more appealing to our visitors.

There are other groups and organizations that are trying to beautify Las Vegas. Right now I would like to acknowledge the MainStreet Las Vegas organization for their efforts at revitalizing Las Vegas. The Grand Avenue Streetscape project will go a long way toward making Grand Avenue “grand” again. It will also help with economic development by getting visitors to visit our two downtown areas.

I would also like to recognize Keep Las Vegas Beautiful organization. This is another group of committed citizens who always go above and beyond.

I have directed the development of a administration, to develop plans to improve our streets and sidewalks, starting with the West Side. We will also look at the Railroad District and move forward in creating a “rapid response” system for citizens concerns, for example, answering the recent concerns of the citizens who live on Lee Drive.

We also need to ask our Tree Committee, and Public Works, to assess the aging elm trees that are becoming a liability to the city and a public safety issue. There must be a gradual way, to replace elm trees, with more acceptable alternatives.

I will be appointing a Senior Advisory Committee; to listen to the various concerns and issues of our senior citizens, and to work in finding solutions, not limited to recreation, solid waste and transportation. Our seniors deserve better service.

We are working with our neighborhoods, to come up with solutions to our traffic problems and crime activity. **There is a growing movement of community involvement, because we are listening and responding.**

Over the next year and a half, I will ask my administration, to work with the council and advisory committees to review current city ordinances – for edits, revisions and fair yet “tougher penalties”.

We must, create tougher penalties for DWI related offenses. We must, create tougher penalties for graffiti. We need to show these criminals, that enough is enough.

There are laws in the books, that need to be enforced. We need to review city ordinances and adjust minimum penalties to today's dollars; we should make the fine fit the crime. Criminals, and graffiti taggers, need to be held accountable and given visible community service – to clean this city. Las Vegas can, become a better place to live. Let's each do our part, to make Las Vegas a beautiful place!

Considering the state of the city and what we have inherited, there is a lot of work to be done. In the past we had two council meetings per month. Now, we are averaging 3 to 4 meetings per month, due to working nature of the mayor and council. The reduction of eight council members to four has proven to be more effective.... *But, let me assure you, it seems the work has doubled, if not more.*

We will, complete the Strategic Plan of the City of Las Vegas, which will identify Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures.

Let me say to you, that my administration, and the city council, will be working hard to improve the overall success of our city and to improve the quality of life for all of our citizens, now, and in the future.

In MY administration it will be about ...putting people before politics.

The BUDGET process may have appeared time consuming, **but it was the most open budget process Las Vegas has ever seen.** We took in ...public input and in more than one meeting.

We will continue to work to get city government more efficient.

In the past, the city lacked an open process for budget development. This year, budget reviews began late, but we got it in on time. The budget is "balanced", we have our required cash reserve, and our investments are healthy. We are socially responsible but fiscally conservative.

My administration will continue to work hard - to refine the Budget and to make the strategic plan, a management tool for guidance.

We will revisit and revise the City's outdated Master Plan, to accommodate changes and to provide a new direction for the future.

We are revamping the hiring process, ...so that people are before politics.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is part of bringing revenues into the city budget income for employees, and taxes into our tax base. Working closely with the Las Vegas San Miguel Economic Development Corporation, we are attracting new businesses and aiming to assist existing businesses with possible expansion and retention.

At this time I would like to give thanks to the EDC, as they were instrumental with the State Economic Development Department in bringing 117 jobs to Las Vegas with a company replacing the old call center.

"Results Las Vegas" eventually plans on hiring a total of 300 employees over the next three years.

I created a Parks and Recreation Taskforce, made up of citizens like you, to review the services and operations of recreational programs, and to make recommendations to better serve you.

The city of Las Vegas, has a bright future, and I promise you, we are putting people before politics.

IN CONCLUSION

Our top focus points for the City of Las Vegas are; Natural Gas, Water, the City Budget, Economic Development, the Strategic Plan, and Public Safety.

I hereby ask you, the city employees and the residents of Las Vegas, to help us as we move to the future with a BOLD and FOCUSED agenda.

City employees, let's all work to improve our **customer services** to our citizens, who are - our bosses. I will work hard with my administration, to keep the community informed. We have opened all lines of communications with all media outlets and we will be reporting more to you, our taxpayers.

This morning I met with department directors, and the most positive feedback on this administration is effective communications. I totally agree. At this time I would like all city employees to stand,... I would like all city employees, to be recognized. Truly, I thank you.

This governing body, under my leadership, will work hard to move the city forward with a new and progressive agenda. But we know the hard work depends on all city employees, the governing body and the community.

We will govern city hall, with citizen involvement.

I now ask each of you, now, to **rededicate yourselves** to making Las Vegas the best city it can be. That means, taking pride in your job, taking pride in your neighborhoods, and taking pride, in taking our city back from vandals, graffiti taggers, and criminals. The more pride we place on our jobs, and our neighborhoods, the more it becomes contagious and others start to get involved.

Let's MEET and EXCEED *the expectations we set on ourselves.* *Lets give our taxpayers, a return on their investment.*

We have – I have – made some mistakes since election, but ...we openly admit them, accept responsibility and move forward. This is how we make things better. We take risks, and we learn from our mistakes and make a better attempt.

In closing, I ask all of you "let's work together". Let's create unity for our community. Let's make this opportunity **NOW..... not tomorrow.**

Let's work together to make a better future where our families and our children can prosper in safety and in comfort and with a better quality of life.

Let's work to solve our limitations and our problems ...and not be held hostage by politics, ... nor by naysayers, who say, "it can't be done." BECAUSE, I SAY ...it can be done.... And it can be done now, not tomorrow. Thank you,and may God Bless Us All.