

## **STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

**Warren Mayor Michael J. O'Brien**

**I am honored to be here this morning. I know all of us are partners in our common goal to build a better community that is prepared to face the challenges of this century. Never before has change--both good and bad--been so rapid. The only thing that is as large--as our challenges--are our opportunities.**

**We live at a time of a diminishing tax base --- yet we live in a time where technology is accelerating at warp speed. We have aging neighborhoods, yet at the same time we find a renewed interest in Urban living. We have countless places where communities can enjoy arts and entertainment; and yet at the same time, we see an ever-growing interest in Downtown Warren's creative events.**

**Charles Dickens said: "These are the best of times and these are worst of times". This Administration has decided to ride events and not let events ride us. We truly believe positive action can make our future even brighter than our past.**

**As you travel down Millionaires Row, on Mahoning Avenue, and pass City Hall, you will see below the American Flag and the Ohio Flag, a banner signifying that Warren received the HEALTHY OHIO COMMUNITY AWARD. This award recognized Warren as a City that encourages and helps residents, employees and visitors, to increase physical activity, eat nutritiously, and curtail tobacco use.**

**Warren, as well as our surrounding agencies, Hospitals, as well as the Tribune Chronicle, is recognized by Banning Together in yet another collaborative effort.....thus being recognized by the State of Ohio.**

**OUR HEALTH DEPARTMENT, under Deputy Health Commissioner Bob Pinti, with the assistance of Warren City Council, the Health Department is attempting to address the Housing Stock. With the issues of foreclosures and walk-a-ways, that are challenging for cities throughout our Country; we will continue to add more pieces to this complex housing puzzle.**

**A COMMUNITY MAY APPEAR TO BE HEALTHY, BUT JUST AS IMPORTANT, A COMMUNITY MUST FEEL SAFE.**

- **First Responders are vitally important. For any community to be successful---for any community to attempt to attract industry---for any community to retain existing companies---their customers, their employees, their service personnel MUST FEEL SAFE. There is an obvious correlation between Safety and Economic Development and Warren is no exception.**
- **Just last week, Safety Service Director Doug Franklin swore in 4 Police Officers to increase our total officers to 83. That is the most officers this department has had in 11 years.**
- **We are in the process of purchasing 6 new police cruisers and 5 new detective cars to equip our officers properly.**
- **Our officers are continuing their 40 hours of in-service training or perishable skills completely in-house resulting in tremendous cost savings.**
- **Our incident Report Writing is done on-site where reports are now available, in most cases, within an hour. This is an obvious convenience to the public where, in the past, this task was performed in a matter of days.**
- **Cruisers and equipment were purchased through funds from the Law Enforcement Trust, as well as Drug Forfeiture---with the cooperation of Chief John Mandopoulos.**

- **We have 6 officers involved in a multi-County Crisis response team headed by the F.B.I.. 3 Tactical officers, along with 3 Negotiators.**
- **Yes, in the Mahoning Valley even our regionalization practices involve the Police Departments.**
- **We have 10 officers working with the Federal Marshals Office, and 1 officer works full-time and awarded in Washington, DC –Officer Brian Holmes---for fugitive arrests. This is the most Productive Warrant Team in the United States.**
- **A noteworthy project over the past few years is the Crisis Intervention Training. Also known simply as the C.I.T. training. This joint Project between the National Alliance of Mental Illness and Trumbull County Lifelines has been another beneficial tool in the role of Police work. But this tool, our officers won't find on their gun belt.**

**It is all about keeping Communities safe, offices safe, while better understanding mental illness and addictions. We presently have 25 officers trained; and as a matter of fact, one of our Training Officers, Lt. Joseph Marhulik, was named “Statewide Officer of the Year” for his work with C.I.T. Training. Again, this is a commitment between our City Police Department and Lifelines of Trumbull County --- AND our Entire Community is the recipient of that collaboration.**

- **JUST AS PROFESSIONAL ARE OUR FIREFIGHTERS, under Chief Ken Nussle. Last year our firefighters completed their first responder training providing them the skills to respond to emergencies not directly relating to a fire.**
- **This idea of this type of specific training was developed by the Firemen's Union themselves ---- WHY? To be a more professional department to better serve our Community.**

**These two vitally important departments would not be able to operate in the manner they are, without the PASSING of the SAFETY FORCES TAX on a Permanent Nature.**

**With the confidence of our Community, our First Responders are FIREFIGHTERS and POLICE OFFICERS can Continue to Protect Lives and Property for the Community we love.**

**Another Department in which our citizens rely upon heavily, is our OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT, under Director Frank Tempesta.**

- **This past winter was no exception. With a record Snow Fall, our Operations Department worked around the clock for days at a time to keep our streets as safe as possible.**
- **Now the focus is on repairing those streets, removing trees, and getting our parks in condition for baseball season this summer, and soccer season in fall----with the addition of more new Dugouts---all completed in-house.**
- **We now have developed our Parks that we remember when we were young. Again, this year, over 500 children will be enjoying our parks with organized baseball. The difference now is that we have combined all three separate leagues into one. The former Warren Baseball, McKinley League, and the Burbank Leagues Organizers have merged into one league --- known as the Warren Athletic Club.**
- **Again, just as we regionalize our Governments and Regionalize our Police Department activities, we also regionalize our Youth baseball. We are starting these concepts at a young age.**

- **We are excited about, again, hosting the National Softball Tournament. This year, we will be using 6 fields all at Perkins Park. Thousands of players, and family members, throughout the Country, will again be in our City-----stopping at our stores, eating in our restaurants, enjoying our community. We will be continuing this tournament for another three years after this year. Congratulations to all those Volunteers and Trumbull County Visitors Bureau.**

**The City of Warren's WEB SITE----warren.org----has proved to be a valuable asset for the City and its residents. We receive e-mails every day from all over the world with questions and inquiries about people, places and events in the City.**

- **Examples----would be the requests from outside the Valley about he upcoming concerts at the Amphitheatre or providing baseball and softball sign-up information for the newly formed Warren Athletic Club. The site has proven so valuable that our Data Processing Department is currently working on upgrading the equipment and software to expand warren.org to provide features such ass online utility bill inquiry and payments and other interactive procedures. If you haven't logged onto---warren.org---do so today.**
- **Our website is updated sometimes twice daily.**

- **In 2008, we have lofty goals for our ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT. Under the leadership of Bill Totten, this year this active department will be involved in projects throughout the entire city.**
- **PARKMAN ROAD N.W. Reconstruction Project is scheduled for construction this year. It will include the Phase I Project from West Market Street to Linda Drive by the Golden Gate Restaurant. New signing and curb ramp on sidewalks will also be installed. This project is at NO COST to the City---with the estimated cost of the Project at \$2.25 million dollars.**
- **The following year will be the Phase II portion of this Project. From Linda Drive to North Leavitt Road. There will be no cost to the City---again using Federal and State Funds.**
- **EAST MARKET STREET from Mahoning Avenue to the Eastern City limits is also scheduled for construction this year. The roadway will be resurfaced, new signing, and sidewalks with curb ramps will be installed. This Project is 2 million dollars with no cost to the City. Again, using Federal and State funds.**

- **WILLARD S.E. will be re-constructed from Youngstown Road to Milton Street S.E., in order to accommodate vehicle and pedestrian traffic associated with the new K-8 Willard School. We will be widening the road, new sidewalks, School Zone Traffic Control Device along with a new traffic signal on Youngstown Road and Willard. This project is also scheduled for construction this summer. The majority of this Project Funding is through grants estimating at \$750,000.00.**
- **Our Engineering Department is currently in the preliminary engineering phase of the Warren Greenway Bike Trail. The Trail will follow the former railroad right-of-way and will extend from the South corporation limits to the North corporation limits. The construction of the first phase of this Project is again 100% federally funded. Total estimated costs for the Bike Trail Project is \$2.2 Million Dollars with the majority of Total costs being Federally Funded.**
- **Our Engineering Department never rests on its laurels. We are presently applying for funds to install pedestrian lighting in the Historical District along the West Side of Mahoning Avenue from High Street to Summit Street.**

**We will be executing this Project in conjunction with the Mahoning Avenue Project scheduled in 2009.**

**This Project, if accepted, will enhance the already beautiful Historic Millionaires Row of Homes and Buildings and tie directly to the Kinsman House, Women's Park, City Hall, Upton House, and other Historical Buildings on Mahoning Avenue.**

**AND, I did mention – IF ACCEPTED. Well, if the past projects under Bill Totten are any indication----we WILL receive that \$175,000.00 Grant and look forward to future development projects under his department.**

- **Our ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT, under the direction of Renee Cicero, had a successful year and is expanding its scope of work to out of city customers. We are attracting customers from Howland and Warren Townships promoting our efficient services at a reasonable cost. With the ever-rising costs of fuel, this Department is still profitable, as well as maintaining our capital needs of equipment.**
- **Last Year was a very productive year for our WATER DEPARTMENT. Under Director, Bob Davis, we are just completing our Small Meter Project of 18,500 residential homes. This innovative Project is first of its kind in Ohio and will ensure more accurate water usage for all residents. The Small Meter Project was paid for with revenue from the Large Meter Project. Both Projects were on schedule and under budget.**
- **AND the WATER DEPARTMENT continues to be pro-active in the Water maintenance projects in virtually every section of the City.**
- **This is yet another example of this Department operating effectively as well as efficiently. By using our Utilities of WATER, under Mr. Davis' direction, and WATER POLLUTION CONTROL, under the direction of Tom Angelo, we are constantly working to improve our customer service as well as attracting business.**

Before I mention another Important Department in the City, we must not forget to recognize our HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT, under the Director of Gary Cicero. Daily communication with that Department is almost a necessity.....Personnel, Health Care, Workers' Compensation.

Our COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, under the direction of Michael Keys, again will be assisting first home-buyers. This grant that was originally a Pilot Project developed by our City, has a new Partner ---- THE WEAN FOUNDATION. They have also included \$75,000.00 to our existing program that will enable 25 new home buyers in our City; and we look forward to a greater relationship with the Wean Foundation.

We are looking forward to the completion of the rehabilitation project of 188 units in the Warren Heights Apartments. This 9 ½ million dollar Project is a Welcome addition to that North End Neighborhood.

We are grateful for the relationship between the Community Development Department, Warren Redevelopment and Planning, and the Regional Chamber.

Walt Good and Tom Presby are very involved in activities in Warren from Site Visits to Job Attraction Projects, to those gentlemen—we say thank you.

We have changed our way of thinking in Warren and the Chamber, under the leadership of Tom Humphries, has played an important role in that Transformation; and we are very proud of the relationship our City has with the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber.

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**As I have stated in the past, we must be collaborators, not competitors. REGIONALIZATION is not a choice; it is a REALITY.**

**We need to Band Together, and look forward, and not backward.**

**With that in mind, I am involved as an Advisory Member, consisting of Mayors and Planning Directors throughout Northeastern Ohio, for Revenue Sharing and Land Use Planning Study. This is called the “Northeast Regional Economic Revenue Study” to promote and stimulate economic conditions in Northeast Ohio.**

**It is again a collaborative effort to look at successful models throughout the Country.**

**For too long, we have competed with each other for economic growth. Now we look forward to ways to share economic success regionally.**

**Again, ladies and gentlemen, we will be changing the way of thinking; that is more regionally. With this active study and the Program of Team NEO and the Cleveland Plus, comprising of 16 counties, we are positioning ourselves more regionally than every before, and Warren, Ohio is part of that change.**

**HAND IN HAND WITH REGIONALIZATION, is COOPERATION.**

**This year to assist the City in cutting grass in abandoned lots, we again are continuing our agreement with Warden Bobby at Trumbull Correctional Institute; AND**

**In addition to that, Warren will be the beneficiary of Grass Cutters in the form of prisoners from the Trumbull County Sheriff Department. That cooperation from State and from the County Sheriff and County Commissioners is greatly appreciated.....COOPERATION**

**AND speaking of Cooperation and Partnership, our City has been the recipient of an enormous amount of assistance from organizations throughout the City---especially THE TRUMBULL 100. Philanthropic organizations and service groups of our City sets us apart. AND Cooperative Ventures as big as the thousands upon thousands who enjoyed ICE SKATING in the Courthouse Park, all the Amphitheatre activities, the Goddess of Speed Exhibits, or the fantastic festivals---the Italian and African American---and, of course, the Relay for Life---all of these events bring thousands of people to our City---there is so much to do in our City, just check the newspapers, our website, or the Convention and Visitors Bureau.**

**This year one of the most important additions to Downtown Warren will be the Trumbull County Veterans' Memorial giving local residents a way to commemorate the military service of friends and relatives. This Collaboration with the Trumbull 100, the Western Reserve Veterans' Memorial Association, the Tribune Chronicle, and others, will bring a monumental treasure that will be given respect and honor to those who have served. Sue Shafer of the Tribune Chronicle is here this morning and I am sure will assist with any questions regarding this memorial.**

**JUST WEST OF THAT MEMORIAL, IS OUR BEAUTIFUL AMPHITHEATRE.**

**For the past few years, we have talked about the Arts and Entertainment in our beautiful Downtown. Well this looks like a banner year.**

- **Along with the traditions of Noon in the Park, Movies Under the Stars, as well as events planned by our Fine Arts Council with Bobbie Brown,**
- **We have an exciting SUMMER CONCERT SERIES----literally every Saturday from May 24<sup>th</sup> until September 27<sup>th</sup>, our Community Amphitheatre will be rocking with Tribute Bands from “Pink Floyd”, the “Rolling Stones” to “Bob Dylan” and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young”, and every ones favorite “Jimmy Buffett”, and Finishing with the Boss—“Bruce Springsteen”. Great Music, Great Sponsors, Anticipating Great Crowds, all in Downtown Warren, under the promotion of Walt English of the Summit Entertainment of Cuyahoga Falls.**
- **Just down the street, Architectural Drawings are being finalized for both the addition to the PACKARD MUSEUM, and Renovation work at PACKARD MUSIC HALL. Year after year, our Music Hall is the Home of Fabulous Concerts, by our W.D. PACKARD BAND, Fantastic Shows coordinated by WARREN CIVIC MUSIC, and the WARREN PHILHARMONIC, as well as several events coordinated by Manager Chris Stephenson.**

- **Our Downtown Volunteers, WARREN GROWS had some great news as the City of Warren was selected to be part of the Main Street Program. This Committed Group of Volunteers has dedicated themselves to a more vibrant Downtown. As you drive or walk through the Downtown, you will see evidence of their work through the Signage throughout the intersections of the core of our City. From watching important football rivalries from the Jumbo-tron at the Amphitheatre to assisting in dozens of innovative downtown projects, this Group is fantastic.**
- **I'm sure you have noticed the new businesses from Furniture Sales, to Retail Stores, to the Acquisition of the Hippodrome by owners of the Mocha House. Our Downtown is shaping; and with plans developed by WRAP, under the direction of Anthony Iannucci, on some key parcels in the Downtown and near Downtown---we could see some significant additions.**
- **Throughout this address, I repeat “THROUGH FEDERAL OR STATE GRANTS”. We receive considerable assistance from Congressman Tim Ryan---especially when it comes to Federal Earmarks and as well as several transportation projects; and a strong relationship with State Representative Tom Letson and Senator Capri Cafaro for State Assistance.**

**HOW DOES A CITY HAVE SUCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS RECOGNIZING THAT THERE IS A SHRINKING ECONOMY AND BEING FULLY AWARE OF CHANGES IN MAJOR INDUSTRY THAT HAVE AFFECTED OUR AREA.**

**HOW DO WE DO THIS FINANCIALLY.** With an excellent relationship with our City Auditor, David Griffing, and City Council, and of course, our Safety Service Director, Doug Franklin, a person who has demonstrated his years of commitment to our City.

Living in northeastern Ohio, there are times ever changing, when we are attacked by inclement weather, we are aware that the sun will shine again and the flowers will begin to bloom --- **CITY FINANCES ARE EXACTLY LIKE THAT.** Bad days are followed by good days; but we always seem to make ends meet that is providing service to our citizens. It is important that the Mayor and the City Auditor have a relationship based on respect and that is the case here. Dave Griffing and I make a point to communicate every day regarding city finances and we in our community rely on his dedication. We are fortunate to have an Auditor with his credentials and his experience to ensure the stability of our finances during a turbulent economy.

**LIKEWISE,** a steadfast **CITY COUNCIL,** whether they are Ward council persons or At Large, or Council President----their commitment is far reaching to ensure a more progressive community.

**AND PLANNING – WE ALL KNOW PLANNING IS PART OF ANYONE’S FUTURE.....**

**OUR CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

- **This is the first Comprehensive Plan in almost 47 years for our City. We have begun the process of developing a Revitalization Strategy that will be implemented over the next five to ten years.**
- **The Steering Committee has been formed and a National Professional Planning, Engineering, and Architectural Firm has been retained “Poggemeyer Design Group”.**
- **We will be asking, as well as relying on, public input and involvement throughout the process with public forums, community and business surveys, and opportunities for public input. And I am confident with the 7 active neighborhood organizations established that they will actively participate in these public forums for the betterment of our community.**
- **Our focus will be to Revitalize our Downtown and Neighborhoods--- attracting new businesses while strengthening our existing businesses with residential opportunities in the Downtown.**
- **AND Developing attractive corridors, as well as capitalizing on the new School Facilities, as well as adapting and developing re-uses for old school sites.**
- **AND Connecting our Parks with the Amphitheatre on Bike Paths and Walking Paths.**

- **IMPROVING OUR OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE.**
- **This Comprehensive Plan of Development will essentially be touching every service, every facility, and every fabric of our Community.**
- **AND will provide a blueprint of implementation for years to come.**

**This will be an exciting and rewarding time for our City. This strategy will incorporate the results of the Plans and Studies of the past, and incorporate the results of those studies, as well as defining specific implementation steps to Revitalize our Downtown, Neighborhoods, and our City as a Whole.**

**I, Again, encourage everyone to get involved either individually or as a part of a Neighborhood organization.**

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**What I have outlined are just a few of the plans and actions that we will take together. As Mayor, I have an opportunity to talk with many people. When you talk with our citizens, you cannot help but be impressed by their fundamental goodness and decency. Their dreams are as real and as caring as the families that dreamt 100 years ago. We can never settle on what we used to be --- we always have to keep our eyes on what we can be. This is our time----this is when we must make our mark. I am committed to a better city.**

**My administration is committed to a better city; and each of you in this room is committed to a better city. Let it never be said – we did not meet our challenges. We will be remembered that each of us stood and met our future unafraid and ready to embrace our future. Just as those who came before us have done, it is part of our heritage --- it is our legacy. Thank you Very Much and----**

**May God Bless each of you and May God Continue to Bless the City of Warren.**