

The Honorable James E. Harrington
Mayor of the City of Brockton
State of the City Address
January 22, 2007

Good Evening President Eaniri, distinguished members of the City Council, honored guests and citizens of Brockton. This has been a very memorable year for me and I want also to express my gratitude to my wife, Karen, for all the support she has given me. I would like to acknowledge the commitment and dedication that the Brockton City Council has made to improve the quality of life in our great city. Council members, you made me a better Mayor.

Citizens of Brockton, I am proud to stand before you this evening and report that our City, the City of Champions is strong. In fact, our slogan: “the City of Champions” has been officially endorsed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, thanks to a hard working legislative delegation.

Public Service is a complex arena, but there is one constant: start with the basics and build upon a strong foundation. St. Francis of Assisi once stated: “Start by doing what’s necessary, then what’s possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

We started one year ago by focusing on the basics: rebuilding people’s confidence in city government. Addressing the needs of our residents is and remains our number one goal. With the support of city departments, my office has been successful in resolving a substantial number of issues. In order to better accommodate constituents, we have extended City Hall hours on Monday evenings. We have also made our website more user-friendly. For the first time in the city’s history, residents can now pay their real estate, utilities and excise tax bills on-line. We have implemented the Assessor’s

Database Program and updated the Citizen's Request helpline. Another new feature includes publishing the meeting schedules for various boards and commissions.

I am proud that Brockton residents are getting the assistance they need and deserve. Our City employees are doing a great job and I encourage them to keep up the good work.

Over the past year we have moved from the basics to tackle the possible. We prioritized our spending and balanced our budget by living within our means, which is not always the popular thing to do. We have given new hope and voice to ethnic communities that have long felt ignored by city government. We have adopted a language service program throughout City Hall. Now, we can effectively communicate with individuals of different origins as well as assist residents who are hard of hearing through our new TTY line. We have made city departments more responsive to taxpayers and business owners.

We have begun to re-connect the City of Brockton to its residents. Throughout this year, we will continue to make decisions that will define the legacy that we will leave to the next generation of Brocktonians.

At this time, we do not have the final numbers from the State, but we will be faced with a budget shortfall again this year. My plan remains the same and that is to do more with less. Rest assured, we will continue to provide excellent service to our residents without interruption.

During my inaugural address, I made a pledge to get back to basics and define what's good about Brockton, the City of Champions. A few of my priorities included:

- Creating opportunities for all:
- Building healthy and safe communities;
- Keeping Brockton Moving

These priorities have shaped my administration and led us to the point where we are ready to take advantage of new incentives that will expand our economy and create opportunities for everyone to enjoy.

It's working. We took care of the basics and then tackled the possible.

With the aide of the Pioneer Institute, we have created a guide to navigate the permitting and licensing process. This guide explains in very clear and concise language what steps need to be followed in order to start up a business in the City. It will prove to be a tremendous tool to our business community.

Brockton's Economic Development continues to flourish. This past year, the Brockton 21st Century Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce and City officials worked hard to secure new business enterprises and helped established businesses expand. In doing so, we have created new job opportunities and have helped maintain positions.

The decline of the unemployment rate is another contributing factor to our economic growth. According to the latest state figures, the 2006 unemployment rate in Brockton dropped to 5.9%; approximately 1,000 more Brocktonians are employed.

In my effort to build a stronger community and promote more effective communication throughout Brockton, I have created the Mayor's Advisory Board. The Board is comprised of individuals from various ethnic backgrounds chosen by their peers to represent their community and /or neighborhood in City Hall. This dynamic group of people has brought their concerns and ideas to the forefront. I would be remiss if I didn't thank the Advisory Board for helping my Administration host the first ever Open House at City Hall last spring. All city departments participated and shared a wealth of knowledge with first time visitors to City Hall.

A Greek philosopher once observed, "The foundation of every state is the education of its youth." I could not agree more. The Brockton Public School System continues to provide new and innovative programs to better serve our students while building upon

proven successes in the classroom. The result: our children continue to exceed beyond our expectations. The dedication and energy that our teachers and staff have invested in our students is evident in their scholastic achievements. Recently, the Brockton Public Schools have shown a steady improvement on the MCAS exams and that is to be commended. It gets better: just a few weeks ago, 199 Brockton High School Seniors were awarded the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship for their achievement on the MCAS exams. The benchmarks set by the “No Child Left Behind Act” continue to challenge us to find new ways to reach our students. Superintendent Nembirkow, Members of the School Committee and I are inspired by the innovative lessons and creative approaches to instruction that we have witnessed in the classrooms. Although we still have more work to do, we are heartened by the efforts that we are making as a team to ensure that every child succeeds.

This year we expanded our full day kindergarten program and next year we will add eight additional Kindergarten classes. The Davis School began its conversion to a Kindergarten thru 8 grade program; the Kennedy Elementary School is now a Kindergarten thru 5th grade and South Junior High opened as South Middle School with the inclusion of 6th grade classes. South is the second school to meet our objective of converting our junior high schools to a middle school model as a means of addressing academic performance issues. These structural changes will provide parents and students with more educational choices and allow us the flexibility to explore new educational methods.

This will be an exciting year for the Brockton Public School System. In addition to the launch of new initiatives and programs, we will soon be breaking ground on two new schools. Now having said that, I would like to explain why although the building of these schools will obviously effect the budget, looking at the big picture there is no way we could walk away from this opportunity. As you know some of our schools are over 100 years old and these buildings do not lend themselves to the technological advantages of the newer schools. Currently, we have the opportunity to build two new schools for 10cents on the dollar. The total cost to build the schools will be around \$53million, but

these two schools will only cost the taxpayer \$5.3 million dollars spread over 20 years.

In addition to providing educational opportunities inside the classroom, our commitment to our youth extends far beyond the classroom door.

In May, I hosted the 7th Annual Mayor's Youth Summit. The summit is a forum for our young adults to voice their concerns about issues that are important to them.

It occurred to me that when we were talking to our youth, their feedback was incredible. But we never shared their thoughts with the youth providers. As a result, I created the Stakeholder's Summit on Youth Issues. This summit is comprised of business leaders, elected officials, teachers and faith based organizations. These dedicated individuals came together to address the issues raised by our youth and helped bridge the communication gap. It was a rewarding experience and useful tool for all the providers involved. We will conduct both summits again this spring.

As a by-product of all this hard work, I have initiated a Youth Advisory Council. This Council is comprised of students from all of our junior highs and high schools. These students will meet with me on a regular basis to discuss the topics of concern to them.

This summer we kicked off our inaugural season of the Mayor's Summer Video Camp Program. The Camp was designed to teach junior high school students the fundamentals of video production through Brockton Community Access. By summer's end, the students had written, produced and starred in their own shows. They were terrific and I must tell you, we have quite a few aspiring filmmakers among us. This program was free of charge to the students as well as the taxpayers.

The Summer Video Camp Program was not the only smash hit this summer. Enrollment

for “Brockton After Dark,” broke record numbers. Nearly 1000 young people participated in various athletic and art programs. “Brockton After Dark” ran throughout the entire summer: 5 nights a week, from 5-10pm at 6 different locations. It was a win, win for all of us: not only did our children have fun, but they were also safe.

We can never take our success for granted, but we have learned that if we make wise choices and provide help when it’s needed, our future will be filled with promise. I believe this is how you move a city beyond the possible and create opportunities for all.

Mr. President, members of the Council and residents of Brockton, we are well on the way to building a healthy and safe community.

The City of Brockton has once again defined itself as a pioneer in science and technology. 122 years after Thomas Edison tested the world’s first standardized central electrical power system and lit all of Brockton’s major municipal buildings through electricity, we continue to champion energy innovation. This past October, we dedicated the completion of the country’s largest Brightfield and celebrated the collaboration of efforts put forth by dedicated individuals in the public and private sectors as well as the world of science and technology to create New England’s largest solar array. The new Brightfield establishes Brockton as Massachusetts’ Solar Energy Champion and strengthens our position throughout the nation as a pioneer in renewable energy.

The once contaminated brownfield the former home to the Baystate Gas Company has been transformed into a beautiful focal point for harnessing clean energy from the sun without the harmful effects of pollutants. The distribution of clean, renewable energy will also help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. In addition to enhancing our city’s landscape and providing environmental incentives, the solar energy power plant will be a wonderful educational tool for students as well as adults. I know Thomas Edison would be proud of us!

The City of Brockton is not just a catalyst for energy innovation, but a leading provider in health care as well. This past summer, I was a proud participant in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Brockton Neighborhood Health Center located on the corner of Main Street and Legion Parkway.

The Brockton Neighborhood Health Center was incorporated in 1992 amidst great political opposition. The new centralized facility will allow medical personnel to continue to meet the growing need for quality health care services. With the support of Brockton Hospital, Caritas Good Samaritan Medical Center and the Neighborhood Health Center, we can continue to build a healthy community well into the 21st century. Again, do what is possible and suddenly you are doing the impossible. It just takes a little longer.

In an effort to protect our environment, the City of Brockton will continue to invest in a “Smart Growth” district in the downtown area. The project invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to existing cities. It is auto-accessible, but also accommodates transit and pedestrian activity, and has a greater mix of housing and commercial opportunities as well as retail use. Smart Growth also preserves open space and protects sensitive areas such as wetlands and recognizes connections between development and quality of life.

The “Smart Growth” expansion project has already proven to be a wise investment for the City of Brockton. The SoCoLofts are booming and the new SoCo Complex on Court Street have already started to sell. The Lincoln Lofts will only enhance our commitment to the “Smart Growth” project.

In order to build a safer community, we rely upon our public safety personnel to help set the pace. These brave men and women continue to demonstrate their desire to serve and protect our residents. With their help, we continue to improve the state of public safety in Brockton. We must all work together as a team to help combat crime, prevent violence

and keep the streets of Brockton safe.

This past year with the help of the City Council, I added eight new cruisers to the Brockton Police Department fleet, the first addition of cruisers in quite sometime.

In addition to the police cruisers, we have also purchased two traffic enforcement vehicles that are used to monitor the activity and weight of commercial trucks traveling within city limits. And it gets better, we will soon be welcoming seven new officers to the Brockton Police force. An increase of officers “on the beat” will be a great asset to our community as well as a deterrent for crime.

We are working to re-energize the Neighborhood Watch groups that were so effective in the early 90’s. We all know that the police cannot be everywhere at all times, but we can have vigilant neighbors watching out for one another. So, I ask all of you to please step up and join your Neighborhood Watch group.

Our Fire Department has done an equally outstanding job keeping Brockton residents safe. The Fire Department is the first responder to all emergencies and we are grateful for their commitment and dedication. Together, we have designed an evacuation route and emergency protocol for City Hall. We have trained nearly the entire city staff in the “National Incident Management System” and “Incident Command System.” What that means to you: our staff is now trained and prepared in case of a catastrophic emergency occurs in our city. This is proof that the Fire Department is clearly doing more with less.

Doing what’s necessary and getting the basics done right. That has been the hallmark for the past year and my goal for the year ahead.

We will never stop our relentless focus on doing the basics right. Because of this focus, the residents of Brockton have given us their confidence and support to do more. People

want us to make smart choices for our city. That support has helped us move further than anyone thought we could. It has helped us do the impossible.

I would like to share with you now a few of my initiatives for 2007.

➤ Tonight, I want to announce that effective immediately Brockton is adopting a Zero Tolerance on Crime. I have met with the Chief of Police, the State Police, the District Attorney and others. We have agreed that we will attack the quality of life issues affecting our city. A special police unit has been formed, comprised of both Brockton and State police officers to combat such problems. Drug dealing, defacing our buildings with graffiti, prostitution and alcohol consumption in public areas will not be tolerated.

➤ With support from our legislative delegation, the Manning Pool will receive a complete makeover. The refurbishment will transform the Manning pool into a family recreational center complete with water slides and a picnic area. The renovations will begin later this year.

➤ The Restoration of the War Memorial is now under way. The War Memorial Building, one of Brockton's best treasures was established to honor the brave men and women who protect our country and to serve as the city's Center for the Performing Arts. Over the years the War Memorial has undergone many changes, and I believe that with the support of the Brockton community we can restore new life to this historic building.

➤ Complete the revitalization of the Pleasant, Prospect neighborhood. The Brockton Housing Authority and the Brockton Redevelopment Authority together with the City has transformed this once depressed neighborhood into a viable livable community. I pledged to use this revitalization as a model for other neighborhoods. This past year, I walked the neighborhoods and I will continue to walk throughout our city and learn

first hand our residents' needs and priorities.

- MCAS scores must continue to rise. I have attended Parent Advisory Council meetings throughout our city and I will continue to keep parents involved in our schools so that together can address our students' needs.

- This past year we initiated employment opportunities for our students. Due to the success of these programs, I will continue to seek new initiatives to keep our young people engaged and safe.

- With the creation of the Parks and Recreations Task Force, we have investigated the state of our parks and recreation facilities and are compiling a plan to refurbish each park: one at a time. The plans to repair DW Field Golf Course have been set and the course will be ready for the upcoming golf season.

- This year we will break ground on the new pipeline for the new desalinization plant. The pipeline will run from Dighton to Brockton and carry clean water to city residents and business owners. The Water and Wastewater Treatment plants are currently being upgraded.

Now, I want to conclude my remarks by stating that I am proud of our City and the progress we have made. Brockton is a better place because of our decision to take care of the basics and tackle the possible.

In our hearts and minds, we know just what our Brockton can be: A city where: beyond all reasonable expectations -- crime continues to decline. A city: where the education of every child is regarded not only as a moral duty, but as a civil right. A city where every man or woman, who is able to work, has the dignity and hope that comes with having a job and lives in a good home, on a clean, safe street and for those of us who work in the

public arena, continue to act in the people's best interests.

That's my vision of the City of Champions and I hope it's yours too.

As your Mayor, I will never back away from confronting any obstacle or fighting any opponent that would prevent our people from achieving all of their dreams in the City of Champions.

Happy New Year to you all and God Bless the City of Champions.