

**STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS  
HILLSBOROUGH TOWN BOARD  
February 18, 2008  
7:00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Tom Stevens, Commissioners Frances Dancy, Evelyn Lloyd, Brian Lowen, L. Eric Hallman, and Mike Gering.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Town Manager Eric Peterson, Assistant Town Manager Nicole Ard, Town Clerk Donna Armbrister, Planning Director Margaret Hauth, Town Engineer/Utilities Director Kenny Keel, Police Chief Clarence Birkhead, Finance Director Greg Siler, and Town Attorney Bob Hornik.

Mayor Tom Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Mayor Stevens recognized those Commissioners present as well as several persons running for elected office. He stated that last year the Town had designated a Poet Laureate just for occasions like this, asked Mr. Pope to address the meeting.

Mr. Pope stated since it was only four days since Valentine's Day, he had written a poem to commemorate it and the Town. He then read his poem.

Mayor Stevens stated although he had prepared comments for this evening, it was important to give the public the opportunity to hear from all the Town Commissioners.

**REMARKS BY COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Gering said he and his wife had lived in Hillsborough for almost 13 years, and he had been elected in 2001 and re-elected in 2005 to the Board. He said from the beginning he had held three principle goals: to preserve and maintain the small town nature and charm of Hillsborough; to strengthen the Town's financial position; and, to improve the quality of life for all citizens.

Commissioner Gering said it the recent past he had seen development pressure continue to increase but they were coping well with them. He said they were making more and better plans for their future, and he had recognized that part of that improved planning was due to increased citizen awareness. Commissioner Gering said looking forward, they were on the right path and as they continued to refine and define what Hillsborough was to become, they would continue to face those challenges and cope very well with them.

Commissioner Dancy said she was now in her 11<sup>th</sup> year of service on the Town Board, and had been the Town's annual representative to the Triangle J Council of Governments to represent the Town's regional interests. She said that she also represented the Town on the Chapel Hill-Orange County Tourism Board, and that Hillsborough had a lot that was exciting to offer. She

said she was very glad to be a part of the Hillsborough Town Board, and believed that they all did a good job for its citizens.

Commissioner Lloyd stated she had served on the Town Board for 16 years and had lived in Hillsborough all of her life. She said that Hillsborough was moving in the right direction, but they needed to be careful about growth, and they needed to watch their water resources carefully as well as sewer capacity. Commissioner Lloyd said it was good to see so many present this evening, especially the staff that supported the Town so well.

Commissioner Hallman said he was the Town's representative on the Metropolitan Planning Organization which dealt with regional traffic issues. He said that one element of the Town was the traffic, and there was really no good news in that regard. Commissioner Hallman said North Carolina was the 10<sup>th</sup> most populace state, and for every dollar of federal highway funds they sent to Washington they received only 86 cents back. He said that 86 cents was then split between 13 different highway divisions, with Hillsborough in the 7<sup>th</sup> division that included Rockingham, Caswell, Orange, Alamance and Guilford Counties. Commissioner Hallman said Hillsborough was cursed and blessed because they had two interstates running through the County, and a disproportionate amount of their highway funds went to maintaining those two interstates.

Commissioner Hallman said another problem they faced was that the major population center in their division was Greensboro, where they had projects further along and therefore got funding to finish those projects. He said what little money was left was what they had for major road projects, and the only major funded road project was Elizabeth Brady Road funded at \$223 million which was not enough. Commissioner Hallman said it was scheduled for construction in 2012, but did not believe that would happen with the funding shortfall.

Commissioner Hallman said other road projects were the widening of Interstate 85 which had been pushed out beyond 2015 and was not fully funded, and the widening of Interstate 40, also pushed out beyond 2015. He said the last transportation plan done had looked out to 2035, and the projections were staggering. Commissioner Hallman said the silver lining was that a lot more bike and pedestrian projects were being funded in this area, and the Town was being more proactive in that regard. He said they were also looking at returning a train stop in Hillsborough.

### **STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS – Mayor Stevens**

Mayor Stevens said growth and development continued to be the number one issue for Hillsborough, and wanted to provide a wide overview of where they were. He displayed a map which was used at last year's Town Address, noting last year was dubbed as "the year of construction." Mayor Stevens said this year there would be something different and significant, and dubbed this year as "the year of openings." He said now the Town would have the opportunity to take advantage of some of the amenities, resources, and facilities that had been constructed over the last year.

Mayor Stevens made the following points:

- The Gateway Center would have County offices opening on March 19, and the parking deck would be opening the end of April along with the Weaver Street Market.
- The Judicial Building would be completed within the next year, as well as new offices across the street and the new Library.
- Another wonderful facility was the new Market Shelter, which afforded opportunities for the Farmer's Market, for craft fairs, for concerts and other community gatherings.
- The County would be building a new Senior Center at the Sportsplex, scheduled to open in the next twelve months, as well as an up-fit of the Sportsplex itself.
- Also in the Meadowlands area the County was also building a new 911 Center.
- Oakdale Shopping Center was now being redesigned, and UNC Health Care Center was scheduled to open in the spring of this year.
- New roads would be opening at Waterstone Drive, providing a new connection between Old 86, New 86, and will take you right by the Durham Technical Community College scheduled to open this spring.

Mayor Stevens said they had something entirely new and a real first for Hillsborough, and that was the site of the new Waterstone Park which would have the Town's very first soccer field. He said people would be able to utilize that field by June. In addition to the park at Waterstone, he said, the Town would have the first phase of the Riverwalk at Eno River under construction along with the construction of Gold Park, expected to be completed in the next 12 months.

Mayor Stevens said another incredible amenity that would be available to help build connectivity and walkability was a sidewalk that would run the length of Nash Street, allowing someone to walk from Fairview over to Highway 70, and to cross over to west Hillsborough and the historic district. More importantly, he said, it would allow children to walk to Central and Hillsborough schools. Mayor Stevens said it was a strategic sidewalk and a great investment.

Mayor Stevens made the following additional points:

- The Town was talking with the County regarding how the old Wal-Mart site might be used, noting there may be some other commercial interests in that area.
- The Town was in conversations with the owner of the Colonial Inn to enact repairs on that facility as well as how to make that facility a real Town asset.
- There likely would be no construction occurring in the Daniel Boone Village, although there were ongoing discussions of how that property might be developed in the future.

Mayor Stevens said if what they wanted as a community was a small town atmosphere, then they needed to work together to choose their future and find the tools to become better planners of their development and growth. He recited the Vision for the Town, noting that the five key things they would like to see for Hillsborough was community, character, heritage, prosperity, and vitality. Mayor Stevens said out of that Vision, they had begun working as a Town to identify the specific things needing doing in order to make that Vision come alive. He said the Town Board, the staff, and all the volunteers were stewards of a public trust to make that Vision a reality. Mayor Stevens said what they did was to provide and manage the infrastructure, the resources, and the services that enhanced the quality of life for all living beings in the community, included the land.

Mayor Stevens said they had invested time and energy into creation of a Strategic Plan, and from that plan they prepared their budgets and work plans. He recognized the Town staff for the incredible work they performed each day, particularly Town Manager Eric Peterson, Town Clerk/Director of Administration and Human Resources Donna Armbrister, Planning Director Margaret Hauth, Finance Director Greg Siler, Assistant Town Manager/Public Works Director Nicole Ard, and Police Chief Clarence Birkhead.

Mayor Stevens then listed the various goals to serve the community:

- strengthen citizen involvement and access
- work to bring trains back to Hillsborough
- more work in the area of arts
- more discussion regarding what development should be like
- increase tourism
- preserve cultural and natural resources
- reduce crime and increase citizen safety
- enhance community sustainability including economic development
- expand recreation and walkability
- provide responsive and consistent services
- preparing for emergencies
- improve communications, which included the hiring of a Public Information Officer and continually upgrading the Town's website
- maintain fiscal strengths and maintain Fund Balance
- invest in infrastructure
- develop long-term financial plans
- develop personnel by supporting learning, training, and growth
- enhance relationships with other entities, including the County, the school board, Chamber of Commerce, non-profits and others

Mayor Stevens then shared some news brought to him by Chief Birkhead, stating that police forces all over the State were experiencing difficulty keeping its ranks full. He said that Chief Birkhead had indicated that for the first time since he had become Chief, they now had a full regiment of officers.

Mayor Stevens said in the area of sustainability, for the first time this year Hillsborough had become a Cool City by signing on to the US Mayor's Protection Agreement, in that they had joined with Mayors across the country by saying they needed to do something about Global Warming. He said the staff had taken that commitment and applied it to Hillsborough, buying hybrid vehicles when possible, conducting a complete audit of energy uses in Town buildings, and making changes where possible.

Mayor Stevens explained the use of a Balanced Scorecard, noting it was a very sophisticated measuring tool that was used by businesses and organizations all over the country. He said that system allowed them to achieve better economies of scale and to be more efficient.

Mayor Stevens described another project they were facing in the future. He said the Town Code and Town ordinances were outdated and in need of upgrading, so for the next year to eighteen months the Town's major project would be a complete rewrite of the Town's zoning ordinances. Mayor Stevens said in some ways it would make it easier for developers in that regulations would be more understandable, and would allow the staff to take better care of Town interests. He said it would provide the right kind of oversight of development projects, and would allow them to observe Green Building practices and encourage conservation of resources. Mayor Stevens said using the ordinances was the right way to do that and would allow them to choose their future.

Mayor Stevens said Commissioner Hallman had already mentioned one of the constraints to the Town's growth was traffic, and added that the drought had brought another one forward and that was water. He said there were natural constraints on growth because of water, and the Strategic Plan said that even with their reservoir expanded they had only about 1,900 homes and 1.6 million square feet of commercial space available. Mayor Stevens said when that point was reached they would have no water left to give so they needed to choose their development wisely. He said compared to their neighbors, their water situation was actually good, noting they had room to grow although it was limited.

Mayor Stevens said at present they had an estimated 189-day water supply and the Town had called for voluntary restrictions. He said mandatory restrictions would not be activated until they reached 180 days of water, noting the reservoir was half full. Mayor Stevens said it was absolutely clear to every member of the Town Board, Planning Board and staff that the assumptions they made about planning for water were not the assumptions they would need in the future. He said they would have to take another look at their planning assumptions and balance all the many issues to maximize their supply of water for drinking. Mayor Stevens said they also needed to supply enough water to support the health of the Eno River, noting that in order to be healthy the river needed a certain amount of water put back into it or the plant and animal life would not remain healthy. He said it was important that they find that balance to make that happen.

Mayor Stevens said they were working to find balance between water usage and their own safety, noting they were reducing and restricting the flushing of hydrants, although a certain amount had to be done to make sure the hydrants were working properly and their insurance ratings remained high.

Mayor Stevens said the standards they now had for when they called for the next level of restrictions on water were very thoughtful and they were exactly as they should be in normal circumstances. But, he said, they were not in normal circumstances during the current drought, so they would be looking at those restrictions carefully to see what could be done as a community to improve those circumstances. He said they would be calling on the community to help them make sure they had the supply of water to meet the community's needs, provide for the health of the river, and to make the Town a safe place for everyone.

Mayor Stevens said he had one last topic to bring forward. He said the significance of the award the Town received from the National Trust for Historic Preservation was amazing, in that they

had named Hillsborough in 2007 as one of 12 distinctive destinations in the United States. He said that designation came not only because they did a good job of historic preservation and they had interesting historic places from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but that they were also a Smart Growth community that did right by its citizens. He said they were not just a great place to visit, but were a great place to live as well and they also provided well for tourists and visitors.

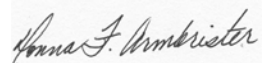
Mayor Stevens iterated the three specific initiatives that their tourism Board were putting together for this year for the Town: moving forward with a wayfinding program, which was a way for citizens and visitors to more easily find their way to amenities; the beginning of a branding system of trying to make sure restaurants and shops had the materials they needed to alert visitors to all the happenings of the Town; and, to increase a more unified presence between all organizations such as the Alliance, the Chamber of Commerce, and others.

Mayor Stevens said they were now seeing greater activity from the Art Council in the promotion of the arts, and were looking forward to the creation of a crafts market and ultimately a performing arts center for the Town.

Mayor Stevens said Hillsborough was a terrific place to work and live, and they wanted to keep their community, character, heritage, vitality and prosperity high. He said that Hillsborough would continue to be a “happening” place year round. Mayor Stevens said that today was President’s Day, and Abraham Lincoln had said that whatever you are, be a good one. He said “thank you” to each and every citizen and Town staff that had helped to make the Town what it was. Mayor Stevens said together, they would make Hillsborough “a good one.”

## **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m. by a consensus of the Board.



Respectfully submitted,  
Donna F. Armbrister, MMC  
Town Clerk