



**MINUTES**  
**HILLSBOROUGH TOWN BOARD**  
**State of the Town Address**  
**February 23, 2010**  
**7:00 PM, Central Senior Center**

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

**STAFF PRESENT:** Town Manager Eric Peterson, Assistant Town Manager/Public Works Director Nicole Ard, Town Clerk/Director of Administration and Human Resources Donna Armbrister, Planning Director Margaret Hauth, Town Engineer/Utilities Director Kenny Keel, Police Chief Clarence Birkhead, and Finance Director Greg Siler.

**OTHER STAFF PRESENT:**

**OPENING REMARKS:**

[7:04:14 PM](#) Commissioner Dancy stated that on behalf of the Mayor and the Town Board she welcomed those in attendance. She said she was pleased to see that they had come to listen and see where they had come from, where they were, and where they were going. Commissioner Dancy asked the Town's Poet Laureate, Mike Troy, to come forward and recite a poem.

Mr. Troy's poem:

Not Wilder

When Thornton Wilder rode our Town  
Lots of towns were peaceful then  
But a peaceful town is remarkable in the year 2010  
It feels so good to be here to all of you and me  
It is fitting and appropriate to thank the powers that let us be  
An island in space and an island in time  
Where it's quite alright for a poem to rhyme

Commissioner Dancy introduced the Town Board members, and then introduced Mayor Tom Stevens who would give the State of the Town Address.

**STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS:**

[7:08:52 PM](#) Mayor Stevens said it was wonderful to have the Town's Poet Laureate present to speak about their Town, and welcomed those in attendance. He stated that last year the room they were currently in was a very new room, and as he had described the year before he had displayed a rendering of the construction site. Mayor Stevens said last year he had described 10 things that changed the quality of life and the face in Hillsborough. He said 5 of them were

places, such as the building they were in now, the Central Senior Center. Mayor Stevens said another was the Orange County campus of Durham Technical Community College. He said others were the Public Market House, the Farmers Market in River Park, as well as the Weaver Street Market and the Habitat for Humanity project in the northern part of Town. Mayor Steven said those 5 places changed the quality of life in Hillsborough, and they continued to do so.

Mayor Stevens said there were 5 events that had changed the quality of life in Hillsborough, things that had been around for some time but were undergoing transformations. He said one of those was Hog Day, with the last year the first year that they were going green and still going green today. Mayor Stevens said last year it was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Last Fridays, which continued today. He said it was the historic Occoneechee Speedway, which potentially had a road coming through and volunteers continued to work to restore some of the historic artifacts present at the Speedway. Mayor Stevens said the Hillsborough Handmade Parade had experienced its second year in existence, and the Central High School Reunion Parade was held in the downtown which had now morphed into the Central Community Band and was one of the most wonderful things going on in their Town.

Mayor Stevens said those were some of the fabulous things happening that continued to transform the Town. He said it had not stopped, noting he sometimes thought of Hillsborough as the “Eveready Bunny” because there was so much energy going on through building, openings, and construction, and it just kept on going and going.

Mayor Stevens said from the Town’s perspective, the biggest thing from the past year was Gold Park. He said it was a wonderful facility that had opened this spring and was much used, consisting of 24 acres and two-third’s of a mile of the Riverwalk walking trails with many loops and twists. Mayor Stevens said Gold Park had picnic shelters and a dog park, as well as a ball field currently under repair, adding it was a fabulous facility.

Mayor Stevens said that there were many Town staff present, and there was something that the staff was very excited about. He said the Town had acquired a new fleet maintenance facility, the old Hertz building on NC 86. Mayor Stevens said it was exciting because the old Fleet Maintenance Facility which was down on the river had been heavily damaged by Hurricane Fran. He said the new facility had skylights which worked so well that they did not need to turn on the lights on most days. Mayor Stevens said the old facility had its own skylights in the form of holes in the roof, and staff had been forced to install internal gutters in order to draw the water away. He stated that facility absolutely had to be replaced, and they were fortunate that the Hertz building had become available for purchase rather than having to construct a new building.

Mayor Stevens said the big landscape changes in Hillsborough were the result of County government., noting that Hillsborough was the County seat and they were proud of that. He said one of the major events was the groundbreaking for Fairview Park, a regional park which had been greatly anticipated by the residents in that neighborhood. Mayor Stevens said another event was the opening of the Social Services offices in the old Wal-Mart property, bringing a sore spot back to life. He said others were the expansion of the nearly completed Judicial Building, the

opening of the offices of Weaver Street Market, and the recent opening of the new County Office Building and the brand new free-standing library.

Mayor Stevens said they had a lot of private investment in the Town as well, highlighting Leland Little's Auction House, The Little School that had just opened in the Waterstone community, Nature's Energy Sources who had just had their ribbon cutting for their world headquarters as well as a manufacturing facility, and other buildings opening up on the Millstone campus. He said the West Hillsborough commercial district on Nash Street was being refurbished, there was a new book store downtown, new shops at Daniel Boone and at Hampton Pointe, and many other private investments.

Mayor Stevens said it was important every year to talk about their vision, because all of the things they tried to do should be in keeping with that vision for the community. He reminded the audience that there were five key words in that vision: "Our vision for Hillsborough is a prosperous town filled with vitality, fostering a strong sense of community, which celebrates and preserves its unique heritage and small town character." Mayor Stevens said prosperity, vitality, community, heritage, and character were the key words and what they wanted to see continued in Hillsborough as they moved forward.

Mayor Stevens said as the Town, they were the stewards of the public trust who existed to make the vision a reality. He said they managed and provided the infrastructure, resources, and services that enhanced the quality of life for the living beings in the land within their town. He said they went about doing that, because they had limited resources, using a balanced scorecard that came down to a one page plan about what they would like to see for their Town. Mayor Stevens said there were 6 top level objectives that they wanted to see, and if they could improve the satisfaction with services, strengthen citizen involvement, preserve the cultural and natural resources, reduce crime and increase safety, expand recreation and walkability, and enhance community economic development, then they were doing their job.

Mayor Stevens said he wanted to talk a little about where they were with some of those issues and what had been accomplished over the last year. Mayor Stevens said as far as improving the satisfaction with services, for the last three years they had embarked on a citizen's survey to allow the public to tell them how they were doing. He said they had received a very high return of the surveys, much higher than average, and the surveys were distributed randomly. He said they had received consistently high marks that the Town was responsive, that officials were responsive, and that they spent their tax dollars wisely. Mayor Stevens said their auditor agreed that the Town kept very good records, and for 15 years in a row the Town had received the Government Finance Officers Association Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting. He said last year for the second time they had also received the Government Finance Officers Association Award for Distinguished Budget Presentation, which was awarded for ease in reading and understanding the budget materials, which went back to their balanced scorecard. Mayor Stevens noted that only 4% of local governments in the State received that award, which spoke very highly of the quality of financial care that they endeavored to apply to the public resources.

Mayor Stevens said it was a challenging time for the budget, with this year's budget for the General Fund about 13% less than it was last year and for the Water Fund approximately 22% less than last year. He said they would continue to try to find what savings they could, and again that had to do with the staff, Town Board, and citizens stepping up and looking for new and innovative ways to provide and maintain the quality of services but at the same time save money.

Mayor Stevens said in regards to strengthening citizen involvement, they had many volunteers who served on the various advisory boards and task forces, as well as volunteers who participated in events such as Big Sweep, which this year attracted 90 volunteers who picked up over 2,400 lbs of litter along the Eno River and in various parks. He said the Tree Board had attracted volunteers who planted trees at Gold Park and along many of the rights-of-way throughout Town. Mayor Stevens said the Neighborhood Watch community groups had sponsored an incredible event in Gold Park last spring which raised money for safety vests for the Town's K-9 dogs that were often put in very dangerous situations.

Mayor Stevens said as far as preserving the cultural and natural resources, they were focusing on ways to be greener, such as using a 3-wheel bicycle at the Wastewater Treatment Plant rather than a motorized vehicle to move personnel and equipment around. He said that was healthier for staff, greener, and reduced the Town's carbon footprint. Mayor Stevens said they were using goats to trim down the ivy on Town buildings, as well as experimenting with innovative ways to use less material in sidewalk repairs, including replacing sidewalks where the ground had lifted up due to tree roots and using cutaways to make sidewalks ADA compliant but do less damage to the trees and save money as well. He said they had purchased a surplus 2½ ton truck with a lift on the back to haul equipment, making it much safer for Town employees, and that truck actually ran on used motor oil from other Town vehicles.

Mayor Stevens said in 2007 they had conducted energy audits on most of their buildings, and since that time they had reduced their carbon footprint by 6.9%. He said with their Town Hall campus they had achieved a 13.5% reduction, and an 11% reduction at Police Headquarters. Mayor Stevens said they had taken 89 truckloads of leaves to local farmers and now made leaves available to the public for use as mulch, rather than transporting it to Chapel Hill to be disposed of in the landfill. He said they were also working with the County and stormwater officials to find ways to help the Neuse River Basin and the Eno River and keep it clean.

Mayor Stevens said they wanted to enhance community sustainability, and one of the main tools was tourism. He said Hillsborough had acquired a brand, noting that most of the visitors were from Raleigh and the Wake County area. Mayor Stevens said that Hillsborough was a place that people liked to come and spend the day, noting it was a day trip destination. He said they saw that in the meals tax which funded the Visitors Center, and that revenue was holding steady despite the economic downturn. Mayor Stevens said those funds were also used to find ways to keep those visitor dollars coming into the Town, and one of those was Ladies Night, with something like 600 people, ladies and gentlemen, coming to watch sporting events in sports bars and restaurants. He said such events brought many people into the Town, but what you might not see was the underlying structure which brought additional revenue to the shopkeepers who were trying to run their businesses and tend their shops. Mayor Stevens said that Hillsborough

was seen as being so good at that that Elizabeth Reed, head of the Alliance for Historic Hillsborough, and the Visitors Center were invited to speak to the National Trust for Historic Preservation meeting, using Hillsborough as an example of a community that was doing things right.

Mayor Stevens said they had recently completed a parking study of the downtown, and were looking at ways to make improvements and enhance pedestrian access and parking, and make things better for vehicle traffic and for trucks loading and unloading. Mayor Stevens said some of the interesting information that had come from the parking study was that if you compared an aerial photograph of downtown Hillsborough to the Streets at Southpoint, you would find that if you walked from one end of the parking deck to the Museum which was about a quarter of a mile, that the distance was less than if you walked the length of Southpoint which was about a third of a mile. So, he said, if you walked from Cameron Street all the way to Cup 'a Joes or the Colonial Inn, you still would not have walked the length of Southpoint. Mayor Stevens said that indicated that they had a very walkable downtown, and although they had tight parking they had adequate parking. He said there were things that could be done to enhance the parking, particularly with signage.

Mayor Stevens said the big economic development and community enhancement project that would make the biggest difference in the coming years was the Wayfinding signage. He said they had plans in place that all signs in the Town would be changed out and replaced with uniform signs to direct the public to particular locations. Mayor Stevens said if anyone was interested in what the new signs would look like, there were already signs posted in front of the new west campus County office building as well as at the new library. He said the original plan was to do that over the next 5 years, but they had decided they could not wait that long. Mayor Stevens said one of the things they hoped to be able to do was to expedite the Wayfinding program because rates were currently lower and the Town had the borrowing power to get all the signs up over the next year and then pay for them over the next 5 years, and it was likely they would save money in the process.

Mayor Stevens said in regards to reducing crime and increasing safety, they continued to see a reduction in Type 1 and Type 2 crimes over the last 2 years of about 12%, and thanked Chief Birkhead and his officers for that. He said they continued to see that lower trend although that was not something you would normally see during an economic downturn. Mayor Stevens stated they also had achieved better fire safety, and continued to have a very strong neighborhood watch program.

Mayor Stevens said lastly was the objective to expand recreation and walkability. He said they continued to support parades, arts events, Last Friday events, and others. Mayor Stevens said they also had a Community Connectivity Plan which the Parks and Recreation Board had developed, and although it would take decades to achieve they were committed to seeing all parts of Town connected. He said one of the big projects coming up was Nash Street, where a sidewalk would be installed that connected the Fairview Community and came down the entire length of Nash Street and across US 70 all the way to the commercial area connecting Central Elementary School, Hillsborough Elementary School, Hillsborough Heights, Fairview, and the

historic district. Mayor Stevens said that project was underway and construction should begin within the next year with completion by the end of 2011.

Mayor Stevens said what you would soon see in terms of walkability and connectivity was a new sidewalk on Margaret Lane from the Library to Churton Street, which was a cooperative effort between the Town and the County. He said that should be completed by the end of the summer, with the sidewalk constructed on the south side of the street.

Mayor Stevens said the people who did those things were exceptional, and that was the Town staff. He introduced a few that were present, including Town Manager Eric Peterson, Assistant Town Manager Nicole Ard, Town Clerk Donna Armbrister, Police Chief Clarence Birkhead, Planning Director Margaret Hauth, Finance Director Greg Siler, and Town Engineer Kenny Keel. He asked other Town staff present to stand and be recognized. Mayor Stevens said he also wanted to recognize those present that volunteered on the various Town boards, and asked them to stand to be recognized.

Mayor Stevens said they had talked about what had happened and what was happening, and he wanted to say a few words about what the future would bring. He said beyond the Nash Street sidewalk project, the Margaret Lane sidewalk, and Wayfinding signage, one thing that was on their horizon was a pilot circulator bus route. Mayor Stevens said they already had a 420 TTA route that went between Hillsborough and Chapel Hill, thanks to some good federal grants and working with the County and Orange Public Transportation. He said they had plans to do a circulator route which they believed would help address bottleneck traffic in the downtown. Mayor Stevens said the circulator route would allow you to shuttle to Waterstone, to the Sportsplex, and to other areas of Town, and hoped that they would see that begin sometime in the coming year.

Mayor Stevens said another big happening would be Riverwalk, which was a long term project but one he believed would be the defining future of Hillsborough in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He said Riverwalk would be a fabulous part of the Mountains to the Sea Trail.

Mayor Stevens said that most of those things he had mentioned, including the circulator route, the Nash Street sidewalk, and Riverwalk were all features coming soon. But, he said, what could they expect in 2010? Mayor Stevens said that 2010 would be a year of things you would not see, noting in many ways it would be the year of planning. He said first and foremost they were well underway with their new UDO, Unified Development Ordinance, where they were combining their Zoning Ordinance with their Subdivision Ordinance to create a unified package so that developers knew exactly what to expect and the Town would get the type of development it wanted. Mayor Stevens said the first public hearings on the UDO would take place in the spring, with plans to adopt it sometime this summer.

Mayor Stevens said 2010 would be a time to work on transportation and a Transportation Plan. He said they had finally settled the issue of Elizabeth Brady Road, which was now off the table. Mayor Stevens said the traffic problems would not go away, and they would continue to work with NCDOT and the MPO to figure out what things they could do to mitigate traffic. He said

transportation planning would be critical in achieving that. Mayor Stevens said the rules were changing in that they now allowed for more local input, and they had to be clear and very steady to make sure they got Hillsborough's projects on the table for consideration.

Mayor Stevens said they now had land of which a portion had been set aside for a rail center. He said that Amtrak had determined that it was financially and logistically feasible, and the Rail Station Task Force was working to design a rail station as well as the development that would take place around it. Mayor Stevens said that development was planned for the Collins property the Town had acquired behind Cardinal State Bank. He asked the public to mark their calendars, noting that on March 31 there would be a public unveiling of the different ideas along with a public forum to discuss what was happening in regards to the rail center.

Mayor Stevens said they had been working for some time on strategic growth and had a Strategic Growth Plan in place. He said they had recently signed an Interlocal Agreement with the County so that they were now in agreement and had rules about how they would work together on the fringes of the Town to better control development and growth. Mayor Stevens said they had also gotten much use from the Town's Vision 2010 Plan, which was suppose to be their future plan but because it was now 2010 it was time to work on their Vision 2025 Plan. So, he said, they had some planning and visioning to do, and the question was what the next step was and how would they tie their land use and all their transportation ideas together to give Hillsborough that new vision.

Mayor Stevens said they still had to plan for their new Wastewater Treatment Plant that needed replacing, UNC was still planning a hospital at Waterstone, they were still working on economic development and planning on Highway 70 and Cornelius Street, and they were doing a Parking Study Plan. He said 2010 seemed to be the year they were doing things that you would not see, but they were laying the groundwork for Hillsborough for the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Mayor Stevens said 2010 was a very critical year, noting that it was a time, more than ever, where they needed citizens to provide feedback and to become involved in Town government. He said they needed people who said, "have you thought about..." and were looking at new visions for the Town.

Mayor Stevens said he could say it was the year of planning, but he would rather say it was the year of citizenship. He said it was the year they all came together and worked together to achieve their goals. Mayor Stevens said they benefited from the fruits of all the good things that happened in Hillsborough; they walked on the trails, the Speedway, and Poets Walk; they talked at various meetings and at gathering places throughout the Town; they went to their jobs and shopped in town; they ran their businesses; and, they supported their schools and their community college,

Mayor Stevens related a story of talking to a young nurse through the Leadership Triangle Program who was part of a program for the entire Triangle area. He said she had been very proud of being a part of that program and had enjoyed coming to Hillsborough to the Orange County campus. He introduced Carlo Robustelli, the Director of the Orange County campus.

Mayor Stevens said they had parks, ball fields, parades and events, and lots of things to do. He said they had churches and temples and communities of faith, and sometimes they did not give enough credit to the spiritual nurturing that was available at so many places in the community and the services those institutions provided to the citizens. Mayor Stevens said they had interesting places to visit right in their own backyards, and they had visitors that came to see those places that they could share ideas with. He said they were a place of neighborhoods and of families, and Hillsborough was a place where they walked, they talked, they learned, they earned, they played, and they prayed. Mayor Stevens said it was a place where people roamed and where people made their homes. He said it was not about local government, but was about everyone coming together. Mayor Stevens said they had incredible private industry, with about a 40% commercial tax base. He said they had many small businesses, non-profit organizations, churches and communities of faith, and many grass roots volunteers. Mayor Stevens said in the 21<sup>st</sup> century they would all have to come together, particularly if they wanted to see their vision of prosperity, vitality, heritage, community, and character achieved. He said it would take public and private and neighborhood partnerships to do that.

Mayor Stevens said it all came down to the citizens. He thanked them for their part in being in the community, noting they needed to work together to meet the many challenges, including transportation, funding, and general growth, while still maintaining their small town character. Mayor Stevens challenged the citizens, particularly during this year of planning and citizenship, to be a part of that.

Mayor Stevens said lastly, he was worried that the nation was in many ways badly divided and had a fairly partisan and dysfunctional way of going about a lot of business. He said he believed they had escaped much of that in Hillsborough, noting that in many ways Hillsborough was a showcase about what was right in small town American, and what was right in the communities of the world. Mayor Stevens said they could be an example of that, and invited the citizens to be a part of that. He ended by saying, "Let's go and have a good year," and thanked those who had attended. Mayor Stevens said that he and other staff would remain for a time and would be happy to speak with anyone who had questions or wanted to offer comments.

The meeting was concluded at 7:45 p.m.



Respectfully submitted,  
Donna F. Armbrister, MMC  
Town Clerk