

City of Cuyahoga Falls

2009 State of the City Address

Weathering the Storm



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Mayor

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Wednesday, February 24, 2010

Members of the Cuyahoga Falls Chamber of Commerce, with the greatest Chamber CEO in Ohio, Laura Petrella, members of my Cabinet, members of City Council, fellow citizens, and of course, my wife Cecilia;

One year ago today, I stood before many of you and warned of the storm clouds that were forming overhead. I spoke of the extended recession and the impact it was having on local and state budgets. I expressed concern that with payrolls being essentially locked –in, due to mandatory collective bargaining, at 3% and health care cost rising between 12 and 15%, it was only a matter of time before the economic bubble would burst. Little did I know that the imminent burst was only months away.

Indeed, a year ago, as a result of aggressive belt-tightening over the prior 3 ½ years, and despite arguably the worst economy since the great depression, the city ended the year with the highest general fund balance in the City's history at \$5.93 million dollars. I was, at the time, cautiously optimistic.

However, as we now know, the jobs creation promise of 2009 nationally has more closely resembled a nightmare. With unemployment a year ago at 8%, it is currently over 10% and since the signing of the stimulus bill, we have lost 2.8 million jobs. These job loss figures clearly have a direct effect on state and city budgets. Cuyahoga Falls is no exception.

Cities essentially rely on two forms of revenue: property taxes and income taxes. In 2009, we saw both of these revenue sources decline.

On the property tax side, we generally look forward to the Summit County's sexennial update which occurs every six years. In 1997 and 2003, we saw jumps of 10.95% and 24.67% respectively. In 2009, the sexennial update

reflects a decrease of .134 %, which translates into a loss of over \$3 million dollars over the next three years.

Similarly, on the income tax side, historically, the city would expect growth of 1-2% per year. In 2009, we saw our income tax decline by \$504,000 over 2008.

A third source of income for most cities is the interest on our reserve funds. Once again, we are seeing a significant drop in revenue. In the year 2000 for example, we realized over \$2.2 million dollars in interest, and now due to significant lower interest rates, we saw the interest on our reserve drop to \$547,000.

In response to these significant drops in revenue, we mandated that the non-bargaining employees accept a wage freeze along with six furlough days. Additionally where applicable, we would cease the ability to sell back vacation and sick leave. I am proud of the AFSCME union which was the first union to step forward and agree to our proposal. Our Fire union, the UWUA electric union and finally the dispatchers, followed shortly. Unfortunately, we did not get concessions from the two police unions, which necessitated the loss of three patrolmen and a community service officer. Additionally, four sergeants were reduced to patrolman status.

So what does the future hold?

Obviously, much depends on the flow of the economy. If 2010 resembles 2009, cities all over the state, indeed all over the nation, will be looking for a lifeline.

In Cuyahoga Falls, we will be negotiating with all six of our public employee unions. We do not anticipate these negotiations will be easy, however, with a keen eye on fiscal responsibility, the administration will be resolute in its demands to lower expenses. And indeed, with payroll representing 75–80% of our general fund budget, the public sector unions are the obvious place to go.

Which brings up the question that I have raised in this forum in the past: Is it time to eliminate public sector unions?

The history of public sector unions goes back to 1962 when President John F. Kennedy signed executive order 10988 allowing unionization of the federal workforce. This changed everything in the American political system. President Kennedy's order swung open the door for the unrelenting rise of the unionized public workforce in many states and cities.

And of course, 47 years ago, the American workforce landscape looked very different. As recently as 1980, there were more than twice as many private sector union members than there were public sectors. Today 51.4% of Americans 15.4 million workers are employed by the government. This is the first time in American history that there are more public sector union members than there are private. So my question is, can we the taxpayers continue to afford this expense?

The problem for the economy is that the public sector unions create a self-reinforcing cycle of higher spending and taxes. The union helps elect politicians who repay the union with more pay and benefits and dues-paying members, who in turn help to re-elect those politicians.

I recall the 2006 example of former New Jersey Governor John Corzine shouting to a rally of 10,000 public workers "We will fight for a fair contract". Mr. Corzine was supposed to be on the other side of the bargaining table representing taxpayers, not labor.

So, how does this impact Cuyahoga Falls?

Wages in Cuyahoga Falls have typically increased annually by over 3% per year. As I mentioned earlier, our City has six unions which we work with that cover over 70% of all our full-time employees. Due to the collective bargaining process, the unions have the ability of rejecting the City's proposal taking it to the next step called "fact-finding". If the union does not like what the fact finder recommends, the next step is binding conciliation. There, both sides list their respective demands and only one is picked. The City and the union have to live by that decision. Based on the rules that govern this process, the fact finder or conciliator must look at what other cities are doing within their contracts. Therefore, if other cities are giving 5% raises and then laying off people two years later because they cannot fund the raises, a conciliator just might rule we too, have to give 4-5% because their cities are giving those types of raises. The whole process

strives to create a “norm” and it truly penalizes cities that think out of the box with creative ideas to save money.

As we can see from the desperate economic and fiscal woes of California, New Jersey, New York and other states with dominate public unions; this has become a major problem for the U.S. economy and smaller “d” democratic governance. The agenda for American political reform needs to include the breaking of public unionisms power to capture an even larger share of private income.

So when is the economy going to turn around? Obviously none of us have a crystal ball. But I do have a theory, somewhat rooted in history.

You’ll all recall, in 1992, the nation elected the former governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton. In 1993 and 1994, President Clinton along with his wife were promoting several liberal causes, not least of which was something we affectionately referred to as “Hillary Care”. Is this starting to sound familiar? In 1994, led by Newt Gingrich and a catchy political program called “The Contract with America”, Congress flipped dramatically thereby putting a damper on many of Mr. Clinton’s plans. This forced the former president to become more of a centrist, thereby giving the nations employers the confidence to invest in machinery and manpower which, I believe lead to seven years of a very strong economy.

For you see, I truly believe the American public likes their politics played within the 40-yard line. I don’t think they are comfortable with extremists on either side.

Fast forward to November. If the current trend holds true and the Republican’s pick up significant seats in Congress, I believe the mood of the country will change significantly and we could be very well poised for a serious economic rebound. So I am looking forward to a rebound mid year 2011, but keep in mind, for cities and states, it could very well be another six months to a year before we realize the benefits due to the delay in tax collections. That is why we are approaching the upcoming negotiations very cautiously.

Economic Development

Despite the economic downturn, the Development Department, under the ambitious leadership of Ms. Sue Truby, worked very hard to leverage every dollar and to place our city into a position to excel when the economy turns around.

Perhaps one of the most significant accomplishments of the Development Department in 2009 was the procurement of over \$5.3 million dollars in state or federal monies to move our community forward. These dollars will be used to clean up the site of the former State Road Shopping Center in addition to sites at 4610 State Road and the former Mud Run Gun Club. Additionally, almost \$1 million of those dollars will be used for neighborhood stabilization efforts along with almost \$500,000 for energy conservation efforts.

But despite our best efforts the economic development arena suffered a tough year in Cuyahoga Falls. With \$29,827,578 dollars invested in our community, this is the lowest amount since 1992.

Maintaining a balance between residential and commercial development is always critical for municipalities' financial stability. Of the total development value reported of 2009, 41.5% of this activity or \$12,365,379 dollars occurred in the residential category – an amount lower than the previous two years mainly as a result of the economy and resulting lack of new residential construction in the region. However, residential construction did continue in Ward 8 with the investment of 1.5 million for 18 new homes starts in Boulder Estates. Ryan Homes invested another \$1.5 million dollars in a single-family and condominium project known as Weatherstone on the east side of the city.

The remaining 58.5% of the total development, or \$17,462,199 dollars took place in the commercial and industrial segments. Despite the economic conditions, several businesses made significant expansions or constructed new buildings in 2009.

Of particular note was the \$2.9 million dollar investment by Juzo Company located on Chart Road. The city partnered with the firm to approve a community reinvestment area agreement which helped support a 17,000

square foot addition and the purchase of new equipment. As a result of the CRA agreement, five new jobs will be created, bringing Juzo's employment to one hundred thirty seven.

The property at the northeast corner of Graham Road and Wyoga Lake Road received a grand makeover. In addition to the new CVS facility (located predominately in Stow), the Motor Mate Auto Center was relocated and a new building constructed. Together with the CVS facility, the \$400,000 dollar investment in Motor Mate provided a fresh new face to the Wyoga Lake Road corridor.

At the northern end of the downtown central business district, the Board of Development Disabilities invested over \$3 million in their new commercial structure. In addition to new administrative offices, the community-based work center (employing 50–75 people with disabilities) will house a public gift gallery store selling products made by participants in the day crafters and customer stitchers employment program. A café and outdoor patio are also included.

283 Howe Avenue has been a vehicle of change, formally a Cooker restaurant, then a short-lived proto-type restaurant called River City Grille; O'Charley's Restaurant was a welcomed addition to this vibrant commercial corridor. With over \$ 600,000 dollars in improvements, O'Charley's opened in October and continues to line customers out the door.

When the popular Golden Dragon Restaurant moved to its current location farther south on State Road, the once bustling hot spot at 2419 State Road was left vacant and abandoned for several years. Fortunately, the new owners saw the potential of the State Road Corridor and invested over \$80,000 dollars to create an Asian Market and Grocery Store. The new façade is a significant improvement to the entire plaza and the corridor.

A top ten employer, Schwebel's, has been baking bread in Ohio since 1906. In addition to baking bread, Schwebel's also operates two retail stores in our community. (25 overall) Last year, the company chose to vacate the retail store on Tallmadge Road and construct a new facility on land owned by the family. The new \$315,000 dollar store fronts on Reed Avenue just off Tallmadge Road. As the new store is located within the Cuyahoga Falls CRA, we were able to assist them by providing a five-year, 50 % tax

incentive which was established to encourage reinvestment in this area of town.

Speaking of top ten employers, in the March edition of the Business Xpansion Journal, Americhem was featured. This issue highlighted Ohio businesses and Americhem was featured for their major expansion and renovation project at their global headquarters through a successful public/private partnership with the City of Cuyahoga Falls and the State of Ohio. Americhem's investment of over \$4.6 million dollars, coupled with the City investment (through CDBG funding), continues to transform an important area of the downtown district into a state-of-the-art business area.

One of the success stories that continues to amaze me is the area of tax incentive agreements. Since 1996, the Development Department has successfully created twenty-six tax incentive agreements spanning over \$103 million dollars in private investment and the creation or retention of two 2,320 jobs in our community! In products ranging from steel and dental, to plastics and medical supplies, the Enterprise Zone and Community Reinvestment Area programs have proved time and time again that public/private partnerships are the foundation for creating new job opportunities and promoting private reinvestment in our town.

As I mentioned repeatedly today, the downturn in the economy has affected every aspect of our lives. One exception to that is Cuyahoga Falls position on events on the Falls River Square District. All events are sponsored with free admission in addition to free parking in all city-owned decks and parking lots.

Revenue from the Pavilion and Falls River Square site rentals increased approximately 20% in 2009 from the previous year to \$57,000 dollars. The popularity of the area is a result of conservative pricing, consistent marketing efforts via brochures (produced and printed in house) and the City's website.

In addition to hundreds of private events and community festivals, the Falls River Square District was also host to the award-winning Riverfront Cruise-In. Designated #1 Car Cruise for the northeast Ohio/western Pennsylvania area by "Cruisin Times Magazine", the car cruise-in attracted hundreds of visitors on a weekly basis.

In 2009, the Development Department continued its commitment to offer free entertainment and activities for families. Co-sponsored by Alro Steel, Altercare of Cuyahoga Falls, North Akron Savings Bank and BJ's Wholesale Club, the summer movie series, Flicks on the Falls returned in 2009 with movie selections such as Night at the Museum, Kung Fu Panda, and Ice Age. On Thursday nights, June through August, the amphitheater seats were filled with families, blankets, lawn chairs and strollers. Clowns, magicians, face painters entertained the crowds before each film.

Rockin on the River continues to be the largest, most well attended free concert series in northeast Ohio with several concerts drawing over 10,000 people.

For decades, the Falls River Square District has hosted some of the most popular outdoor festivals in the region. The Irish Festival and Oktoberfest continue to draw record crowds, bringing more than 10,000 visitors to the district.

In 2009, the City welcomed a new festival- Festa Italiana of Cuyahoga Falls. More than a festival, Festa Italiana is a celebration of culture, featuring Italian language lessons and movies, a visit from the Italian Consulate, bocce and Mora tournaments, wine tasting and a grape stomping event and superior performances from Italian tenor Salvo Randazzo.

Another destination location that keeps Falls River Square on the map is the Ice Rink at Falls River Square. One need only to traverse the Route 8 expressway south to the Broad Boulevard exit, where a multitude of outdoor lighting, holiday decorations and shade sails will literally "mark the spot". Making its debut in 2004, the Ice Rink continues to draw thousands of people to the district during the winter months.

On Wednesday, October 14th, the new Highbridge Glens Park on South Front Street was rededicated- 130 years after its initial dedication.

As part of the Cuyahoga Falls River Brownfield Master Plan, the City purchased the Prospect Mold building and demolished it in an effort to transition land use from industrial to public green space; and to highlight the beauty of the river and gorge area.

The two-acre urban public park included the reconstruction of the Prospect Bridge. The park also includes a new wooden walkway leading down into the gorge area with several landings for viewing. The future, ultimate goal is to connect this walkway to the existing metro park trail located further south on Front Street.

2009 bought about four additional redevelopment demolition projects – the former H & M Metal property and three single-family homes. (All demolitions and property purchases were funded by Clean Ohio Funds and CDBG funding) Purchasing two older homes, one on Front Street and the other on 2nd Street allows the extension of Prospect Street from Front to Second Street. The project is in the design phase with construction to follow this year.

In addition to allowing residents easier access to the newly dedicated High Bridge Glens Park, the creation of this new street will entice a new \$12 million dollar investment at the corner of Prospect Avenue and Front Street. The proposed Watermark Building moved closer to development in 2009. In the fall, the Ohio Housing Financing Agency (OHFA) awarded approximately \$ 800,000 dollars in tax credits for the project. Watermark promises to be a four-story mixed-use building with street level commercial space combined with senior living apartments and market rate condominiums. A Cuyahoga Falls company, Testa Builders is the developer of the project, anticipating summer 2010 construction.

And of course, one of the biggest projects ever taken on by the City of Cuyahoga Falls, is the transition of the State Road Shopping Center to what will ultimately become Portage Crossing. After the purchase of the 25-acre parcel in August of 2008 and the creation of Requests for Qualifications in the fall 2008, the next step was the selection committee's review of the four respondents to our RFQ and final recommendation. The committee comprised of city council members Debbie Ritzinger, Diana Colavecchio, and Ken Barnhart and administrative staff consisting of the Finance Director, Service Director, Planning Director and Development Director unanimously selected Stark Enterprises as the developer. On May 14, 2009, a press conference was held at the Natatorium announcing the decision.

During this same time period, we learned of the successful request for a \$2 million dollar grant from CORF (Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund), which was utilized for the demolition and environment remediation of the former

State Road Shopping Center Buildings. After the May 2009 trip to the ICSC Convention (International Council of Shopping Centers), we began our strong partnership with the Stark Team in jointly marketing the site to retailers.

August 21, 2009, marked an historic day in the record of public events for Cuyahoga Falls. A celebration was held on that hot, windy day attended by thousands of onlookers who wanted to be a part of history, complete with food, fireworks and entertainment, the celebration culminated with my feeble attempt to demolish. Through the remainder of the year, the demolition team worked daily to bring the entire 350,000 square feet of buildings down to a pile of rubble. By year-end, the contractor accomplished the task utilizing green measures by crushing the concrete on site, which will be later used to fill in the basement of the buildings.

On February 8th, City Council passed the legislation to proceed with the sale of the property to Stark Enterprises. The completion of the new Portage Crossing development:

- Removed a blighted, dilapidated structure which will be replaced with a state-of-the art neighborhood retail center
- Will provide the city and the region with new retail opportunities
- Will provide the Cuyahoga Falls school district with 2 1/2 times the revenue generated by the former State Road Center
- Will retire all of the City's original purchase price
- Will provide over 440 job opportunities
- Will increase city utility revenues
- Will set a new tone for the entire State Road Corridor

We are delighted that Stark Enterprises will construct a project here in Cuyahoga Falls that resembles their many other first class centers – most notably, Crocker Park. You know a Stark project when you see it and as his mantra states “It’s all about the experience” and Portage Crossing will certainly enhance our quality of life in Cuyahoga Falls!

Parks and Recreation

Under the steady leadership of Bill Lohan, our Parks and Recreation program had a banner year! Indeed, as the economy continues to tighten, families in the Cuyahoga Falls community and surrounding areas are trying to cope while looking for ways to pursue recreational activities. We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that despite tough economic times, we need to have recreation in our lives. During times when families are not taking traditional vacations, there are things we all can do and still consider recreation – it just may be a bit closer to home. Cuyahoga Falls Parks and Recreation provides just that! The proof may be found in the recent acknowledgement of top honors this year in the 2009 Beacon's Best Awards by the Akron Beacon Journal.

- The Natatorium – top ten workout places
- WaterWorks Family Aquatic Center - #1 best place to swim
- Brookledge Golf Club - #1 Golf Course
- Downview Sports Center - #1 miniature golf course

The Natatorium continues to be the “Crown Jewel” of Cuyahoga Falls, with attendance figures continually on the rise, 2009 saw 737,557 patrons visit the Natatorium, for an average of 2,007 visitors per day! And although statistics coming out of the Natatorium can be staggering, the one that impresses me relates to our treadmills and ellipticals, In 2009, these pieces of workout equipment logged a record number of miles – over 3 million miles! That's the equivalent of traveling along Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica, California 1,255 times!

The highlight of the summer at Brookledge Golf Club was the installation of a new automatic irrigation system. This upgrade combined with the renovation of 29 sand bunkers has transformed Brookledge Golf Club into one of the finest courses around. Confirmation of the ranking came last summer when Sports Time Ohio (STO) “Tee it up Ohio” selected our fine golf course to be the weekly featured course on August 19th. This premiere golf program showcases top-rated golf courses and facilities throughout Ohio and the United States. “Tee it up Ohio” is broadcasted to more than 4 million households exclusively on the Sports Time Ohio network and is co-

hosted by PGA golf pro, Jimmy Hanlin and Cleveland's Sports reporter, Mike Cairns. Brookledge looked better than ever as the hosts of the show referred to Brookledge as the "hidden gem" of northeast Ohio golf.

Weather was a major deterrent to Waterworks Family Aquatic Center in 2009, with only 31% of the days with a high temperature over 80 degrees and 24% of the days with a high below 75 degrees, revenue was down 6% and attendance was down 4.5%. We are hopeful for a warmer and sunnier summer this year.

Quick Cultural Center remains the premier gathering spot for seniors. Every year we add new and interesting programming to this unique facility, whatever your interest might be, check out the Quirk Cultural Center and you'll probably find a program to fit your needs.

The mission statement of the Park Maintenance Division is to provide clean, well maintained inviting, attractive usable public parks for the enjoyment of the residents. This group of dedicated, multi-talented men and women do just that, and beyond. Park Maintenance maintains, preserves and enhances over 90 acres in twenty-two park/school sites and an overall total of 550 acres of property through out the City.

Safety Forces

Both Fire Chief Paul Moledor and Police Chief John Conley were asked to not only maintain the high level of service that our residents have come to expect, but moreover, to constantly look for ways to reduce costs. In as much as police and fire are traditionally two of our highest budget departments, needless to say, we were constantly looking to these two areas for cost reductions. I am confident that in 2010, I will be able to count on their continued support.

Information Services

2009 marked the first full year of the new Information Technology Services Department. (ITS). As with all departments in the city, deep budget cuts were the norm due to the financial pressures applied to the General Fund by a weak economy. In an effort to reduce cost and to benefit from the economics of scale, the information Technology Services Department was created by combining the Information Services, Technical Services and Communications (Regional Public Safety Dispatch) departments into one.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the fine job that John Konich has done in taking on this huge challenge. The results we have witnessed with the combining of those three departments into one have truly exceeded our expectations.

Public Services

In the area of public service, we are blessed to have one of the finest Service Directors in the state of Ohio. Not only is Valerie Wax Carr an outstanding and highly intelligent service Director, moreover, she is one the most wholesome and most honorable people you could ever meet.

One of the largest initiatives ever undertaken in our public service area has been the implementation and installation of our citywide Automated Meter Reading. With an aggressive eighteen-month time frame to automate residential and business water and electric meters, the installation schedule remains on track and progress is steady. By year-end 2010, the vast majority of meters citywide will have been replaced or upgraded to full automation. To date, nearly 25,000 water and electric meters (60 %) combined have been installed.

City Council passed a ten-year performance contract on July 21, 2008 with Johnson Controls, Inc. primarily for the implementation of a citywide automated meter reading system. Through this massive endeavor, the city will realize a savings in excess of \$2 million dollars over the ten year term, the project is self-funded, and if for any reason the city does not meet the

financial expectation set by Johnson Controls, Johnson Controls will pay the city for such short falls. This project is a win-win!

Automated Meter Reading lowers operational costs of reading meters by enabling the City to read electric and water meters without a physical visit to the customer. AMR provides options such as demand readings, two-way communications, more customer flexibility in which individual due dates may be selected, and offers our staff the ability to do remote shut-offs. In addition, with the new automated technology, electric power outages and water leaks can be identified and serviced more quickly. Furthermore, the backbone that supports our communications also provides fiber to the City. With all parties working together, the project will continue to be a success and reach the goals and deadlines that have been set. Once again, Cuyahoga Falls remains on the cutting edge in implementing the latest technology and enhancing efficiency for our community.

2009 marked the 120th Anniversary for our Community's publicly owned electric system. A special program was held to commemorate the milestone in our City's history. The program featured two energy efficiency and weatherization sessions co-hosted by the Cuyahoga Falls Library, and was well attended. Approximately 250 residents attended the program and received Home Conservation Kits to assist with planning their own home weatherization and energy conservation efforts. Congratulations to the Cuyahoga Falls Electric System for 120-years of outstanding and cost effective service!

The City held its annual Arbor Day Ceremony on Friday, April 24, 2009 at the site of the new High Bridge Glens Park on Front Street. The ceremony honored the "Year of the River" which featured a poster contest from the 3rd grade students at Dewitt Elementary School and a ceremonial planting of a Heritage River Birch Tree. Elaine Marsh, Co-Founder of Friends of the Crooked River, also spoke at the ceremony about the history of the Cuyahoga River.

We launched our 21st season of our popular Adopt-A-Spot program this past May. This year we held our first annual Plant Swap. Stewards gathered together out at Water Works Park to exchange perennials with each other. Our goal was to plant at least a few perennials in most of our beds, to help cut back on the number of annuals we need to purchase each year.

This year, our local businesses continued to generously support our beautification efforts despite the poor economy. We raised over \$13,000, which goes towards the purchase of flowers, mulch, etc. for our 100 sites.

On May 6, 2009 CSXT Railroad began a complete concrete upgrade on the Bailey Road tracks, similar to the Broad Blvd. Railroad Crossing upgrade in 2007. The crossing was reopened on May 15th with a smoother and more leveled surface for motoring traffic.

Rather than resurfacing with asphalt on an annual or bi-annual basis, a more durable and longer lasting concrete base and surface was installed at the intersection. Nearly two years after the Broad Blvd. upgrade, the surface and durability of the crossing has not depreciated, nor required additional attention or improvement. We look forward to the same results with the Bailey Road upgrade in many years to come.

The 2009 Leaf Pickup Program was a resounding success. Leaves are picked up on all public residential streets three times each. It takes two weeks to get through the City for each pickup for a total of six weeks. With 14,600 cubic yards of leaves, 2009 represented the second highest amount of leaves ever picked up by the City.

The winter of 2008/2009 started out a month ahead of schedule. It snowed seven times in November (2008) leaving us 24.25 inches of snow. January (2009) was one of the worst on record. There were only 4 days in January that we did not have to apply salt to our streets. There were 14 snowstorms that dumped a total of 36.75 inches of snow that month. It was considered a harsh winter in terms of snowfall, number of storms, salt usage, brine usage and potholes. The City received 88.75 inches of snow from 36 winter events. The winter before dropped 74.25 inches from 33 events. This marked the fourth year in a row that the winter weather was worse than the previous one. So much for global warming!

The Epoke Salt spreaders saved us an estimated 7,442 tons of salt worth over \$324,000 last winter. The City purchased 7 more units in 2009 to complete the fleet of 16 units and become the largest municipal fleet in the country. We were also the first in Ohio and now there are more and more communities buying these cutting edge units. Over the past four seasons, the Epokes have saved the City an estimated 18,000 tons of salt worth \$712,236!

2009 was the 20th year of our City's highly successful Recycling Program. In the past year, we were able to divert 8,079 tons from the landfill thereby saving our City \$341,338. Over the course of the past 20 years, our Recycling Program has saved the City an amazing \$8,113,915.

On May 18, 2009 the City officially dedicated Route 59 to our local fallen soldiers, Bryan W. Large and Justin T. Walsh. The dedication ceremony took place on Front Street across from the Acme and was attended by many family members and friends of both families. Bryan's father Larry Large and Justin's father Jim Walsh officially unveiled the new highway signs and spoke a few words to the crowd about how much their sons meant to them and thanked everyone for their love and support.

And of course, one of the highlights of 2009 in Cuyahoga Falls occurred in April, when our community was recognized as one of the top rated cities in the United States according to Relocate America. Relocate America is a leading online relocation resource for consumers who need immediate access to city data.

Relocate America based the 2009 awards on economic, environmental, education, employment, housing and crime data from the previous year.

Knowing that larger cities received notable recognition, we were elated to be selected as one of only three cities in the State of Ohio and moreover, one of the only 100 cities in the nation.

We all know the economy has been dreary and in fact, typical February weather in northeast Ohio is dreary. However, we are also very confident that, with all the major projects we have put in place, the outstanding planning that has been developed, that Cuyahoga Falls will in the not-too-distant future be basking in the reflecting glow of major success!