



T A M A R A C S T A T E O F T H E C I T Y : 2 0 1 0

Presented by Mayor Beth Talabisco on March 10, 2010

Good evening and welcome. I'd like to thank so many of my friends, colleagues, and neighbors for joining us this evening. Four extraordinary individuals, who fall into each of these categories, and play a vital role in the work of the City, also share the dais with me: Commissioners Bushnell, Atkins-Grad, Glasser, and Vice Mayor Dressler.

I've been privileged to work for the people of Tamarac since 2003 when I was first elected as a Commissioner in District 2. I can honestly say that the group who currently share the legislative branch of our government with me are the kindest, most respectful, and productive Commission I have had the honor to serve with. My sincere gratitude to each of you for what you do for our City and your unique talents and observations on the issues we face.

I'd also like to acknowledge the incredible staff we have in the City, led by City Manager Jeffrey L. Miller. Jeff and his management team have the formidable task of breaking down complex issues so that five different personalities, with five different perspectives, can understand those issues, ask appropriate questions, and make informed decisions.

Sometimes staff is asked to go back to the drawing board, by no fault of their own, and all the while they do it with humility, grace, and professionalism.

Thank you to our City Attorney Samuel S. Goren and his staff for their invaluable guidance as well; keeping all of us in line and up to date on the latest developments at the County and State levels.

And of course my incredible husband Jack. Each year that passes becomes better and more interesting than the one before. You're my rock – and at the end of last year when so much was going on with the election, you always reached out a steady hand for me to hold, lent an ear to confide in, and were my best advisor, as always.

The theme of Tamarac's 2009 Annual Report, which was mailed out to the community in the January 2010 issue of the *Tam-A-Gram*, is Smart Growth and planning for the future; that's what I'd like to speak to you about this evening.

Like the imagery on the cover of the Annual Report, Tamarac has grown over the past forty-seven years from a seedling into a mature sapling. Even as we approach our fiftieth anniversary in 2013 and what would appear to be the complete build-out, below the surface, beyond what may be readily apparent to the general public, work has been done on our foundation – it is that work has helped us to strengthen our roots, and it is that work which has prepared us so well for the challenges we face today.

It's no secret we're in tough times. This is not a new message. The real estate and financial markets remain volatile. Some of our neighbors are losing their jobs, and many are even losing their homes. A recent report in the Sun-Sentinel stated that 4 out of 10 homeowners' in South Florida owe more on their homes than what they are worth. And, within the last couple of weeks the Broward County Property Appraiser's Office informed the City that they are predicting a 25% decline in our property tax revenues for fiscal year 2011 – that's approximately 5% more than what they had previously told us.

This is the message I must deliver this evening. Less revenue will mean a tighter budget and of course a tighter budget means that we in the City must become even leaner, work even smarter and even harder to fulfill our vision of "Leading the nation in quality of life through safe neighborhoods, a vibrant economy, exceptional customer service, and recognized excellence."

This scenario is not unique to Tamarac. Our fellow municipalities throughout Broward County, and the entire Country in fact, are dealing with similar circumstances. Having to do more with less is not new to our neighbors in homes down the street, to the restaurant on the corner, or the business across town.

Tough economic times are our reality. Dealing with the ramifications; making the tough decisions; and explaining to our constituents why one program may need to be scaled back while another is expanded, is our job.

An example of one of those recent tough decisions my colleagues and I recently made was the decision to postpone indefinitely the project that was to be known as Water's Edge Park on 61st Avenue east of University Drive. A worthy project, but the timing is just not right.

I've been doing this long enough to know that there is no way to please everyone. Some decisions and actions will make sense to one group, yet possibly anger another. Some people may feel elated, others slighted. Believe me, I know... and I agonize over some of those decisions.

In the coming months Tamarac's budget will need to be cut – just as it has been cut for the past 2 years in a row.

I recently attended the United States Conference of Mayors with over 220 other mayors from around the Country. I'd like to share with you some startling statistics:

- 4 in 5 cities expect budget shortfalls
- 81% are postponing projects
- 75% are eliminating positions
- 73% are reducing purchasing and procurement

In order to balance budgets, “Cities of all sizes and in all parts of the nation have been forced to institute layoffs, furloughs, service reductions, and fee increases.” (*The United States Conference of Mayors, The 2010 Metro Agenda for America)

I’d also like to share with you that, like many of my fellow mayors across the country, I believe that some good work has been done through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that was signed into law last February, but its greatest shortcoming is that funding was not directed toward municipalities, and one of my greatest focuses in the coming months will be to lobby and advocate for more funding on the local level, to fund local projects, and to grow our local economy.

As I’ve stated in the past, everything is on the table – all, or none, of these options may work for Tamarac as we move forward. Over the past 2 years the City’s budget has been trimmed by over \$11 million by eliminating some of our open positions, putting on hold large expenditures and projects, implementing a hiring freeze, consolidating divisions within City Departments, closing Satellite City Hall, and other similar actions.

We have already begun the budget process for fiscal year 2011. My colleagues and I, along with Jeff and his staff, have our shovels out and are digging deep looking for additional areas for potential reductions.

There is a lot of information that we must assimilate, scenarios to consider, consequences to think through on each issue presented to us – at times I meet people who question a particular way I voted on an item and I have to assure them that

although I understand their concerns and individual wants, there are other factors that come into play such as grant funding limitations, future land use restrictions, other constituent's needs, local and State ordinance limitations, and more.

My point is, we debate and we agree to disagree with the utmost respect for each other and our residents.

These are trying times, but the resolve we have to work through them will allow us to persevere, and to move smartly into the future.

The message I deliver to you this evening is one of cautious optimism. Yes, we still have some challenges ahead of us, but our City continues to make great strides as well.

- Our vision and reputation as a business- friendly community helped to bring KSM Electronics' new headquarters to Tamarac last year – along with over 150 jobs.
- Our commitment to working with new businesses also brought the new Hampton Inn on Commercial Boulevard, adjacent to the Sawgrass Expressway.
- Other successes include the new commercial center, also located on Commercial Boulevard, just West of Nob Hill Road, with new businesses such as Subway, Rotelli, Dunkin Donuts, and Solantic Medical Center, bringing over 100 more jobs to the City of Tamarac.

Despite our challenges, the state of our City remains strong.

As part of the preparation and building of our solid foundation, we maintain our outstanding credit rating. Our 2010 budget is balanced and we continue to win accolades for our financial acumen.

In addition, our recent resident and business surveys show that we continue to perform above the national average when it comes to customer satisfaction. In fact, as other Cities' scores have decreased over the past year, which is typical in a down economy, Tamarac's scores have increased or stayed the same.

One area where our scores increased is in regards to public safety. When asked about their satisfaction with the visibility of police in their neighborhoods, Tamarac's residents scored us over 5% higher than in our 2007 survey results – we experienced an incredible increase while the Florida average decreased by 8%, and the national average decreased by 5%.

Last year in my State of the City address I announced the formation of the Interfaith Leadership Council – this group of religious leaders from our community meets regularly and can count as one of its accomplishments the success of the Community Food Bank which benefits Family Central.

Also this past year, our City saw the formation of its official Historical Society – many of the members of this dedicated group are in attendance this evening, and their first exhibit is on display in the atrium, with their second exhibit to come in May.

In June 2009 we graduated the third class of our popular citizen academy, Tamarac University and we are about to begin our fourth class on April 13th. With over 70 graduates of TU, these alumni have become some of our most visible ambassadors in the community and many of them are here this evening, one of which sits on the dais.

I spoke of the housing crisis earlier, and the effect it is having on our City – well we've never been the type of City to sit back and accept fate as it is dealt to us. We've taken action against rising foreclosures in the form of our Neighborhood Stabilization Program. Armed with over \$4.7 million in federal grant money we've already helped over 30 families realize the dream of homeownership, while at the same time helping to stabilize property values.

Stabilizing property values goes beyond helping to get homeowners into foreclosed homes. This past year we joined the Broward County Adopt-A-Road program; you may have noticed signs up throughout the City – the program is so successful that we will be adding new stretches of road to be up for adoption soon.

In addition, our Neighborhood Partnership Program, which offers matching grant dollars to Homeowner and Condo Associations to assist in beautifying the common elements of communities, continues to be a great success and build partnerships.

A few other accomplishments from this past year include: the opening of our great new facility, the Tamarac Recreation Center; the addition of three new sculptures to our public art collection, *Dawn and Dusk* by Jane DeDecker, and *Under the Shadow of a Big Tree* by Ilan Averbuch. (I do have to take a moment to point out, as we always do, that Tamarac's public art IS NOT paid for by tax dollars – these fabulous pieces which will last for generations to come are paid for by the Public Art Fund set up by the Public Art Ordinance. The Ordinance requires that 1% of the construction value of new projects or improvements be set aside for public art.)

This year, I will be working with our community partners and our local schools to help further the “Let’s Move” campaign championed by First Lady Michelle Obama. Tamarac is an active City with many parks and activities for people of all ages to take part in. The “Let’s Move” campaign will be a great compliment to our efforts as it is designed to get kids active and reduce childhood obesity rates. Look for more information on this important project in the months ahead.

In closing this evening, let me assure you that Tamarac is on solid footing and moving in the right direction. We may sway a bit in these unsteady winds, but just as in the past, nothing will break us. I have a great deal of pride in this City – I know the work my colleagues; Vice Mayor Dressler as well as Commissioners Bushnell, Atkins-Grad, and

Glasser, and I do, day-in and day-out, is purposeful and will have a lasting effect on the fabric of our City as we continue to move smartly into the future.

Good night, and thank you.