

Wake Up and Let in the Sunshine
By Mayor C. Kim Bracey: February 10, 2010

I am grateful to everyone, from former Mayor John Brenner to the many dignitaries and citizens who braved the cold to join us near the steps of City Hall on inauguration day January 4th and to the many family members, friends, associates, and well-wishers along the way, all of whom have expressed and shown their genuine support and care for our city. I am most grateful to the citizens of York, who have entrusted me to diligently, honorably, and effectively serve them.

Together, we achieved a smooth, seamless transition in leadership at City Hall of which we all can be proud. This bodes well for our future as a city. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I have experienced a stimulating, enriching, and heart-pounding month at 50 West King Street. We have hit the ground running on our “nine initiatives for our first nine months”.

In the first month alone, I experienced a birthday, received a ceremonial check from Senator Robert Casey for \$779,200.00 for our two city markets, met with the Commonwealth’s Secretary of Community and Economic Development, visited each of our energized elementary schools for an assembly, met with the city’s auditing firm, accompanied Interim Police Chief Kahley on an evening shift patrol, met with President Obama, ordered two snow emergencies, along with City Council President Genevieve Ray and Councilman Nixon attended the elected officials training sessions of the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities in Harrisburg and I presided over weekly cabinet meetings and met individually with each of our directors to ensure that we are properly focused on our ongoing and new initiatives.

I say all this not to boast, but to let you know that being mayor is more than just focusing on one initiative or project or the crisis of the day, week, or month. The City of York, after all, is two things at the same time. First, it is an organization – one that provides important services to a group of people. This is the “York” that I manage day-to-day, with the advice and consent of City Council and the help of a staff of dedicated employees.

But it is also a place – a place that will continue to exist whether or not I am Mayor, and regardless of the financial status of city government – a place full of wonderful people and character that cannot be undone by whatever problems the city organization faces at any given time. So I really have two jobs – running an effective organization, and creating a bright future.

Our city government organization is committed to giving you quality, cost effective, essential services each week while we nudge long-term, visionary projects forward. We are at once short-sighted and far-sighted, inspecting the bark of one tree while also looming above an entire forest.

But it would be sheer arrogance for me to suggest that our future can be created from City Hall. I need and seek your help and was reminded of this when reflecting upon the recent death of R&B singer/songwriter, Teddy Pendergrass. Along with Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes in 1975, he struck a chord literally and figuratively for me in the song “Wake Up Everybody”. In that song, he sung:

*Wake up everybody no more sleepin in bed
No more backward thinkin time for thinkin ahead
The world has changed so very much*

From what it used to be so

*Wake up all the teachers time to teach a new way
Maybe then they'll listen to whatcha have to say
Cause they're the ones who's coming up and the world is in their hands
when you teach the children teach 'em the very best you can.*

*The world won't get no better if we just let it be
The world won't get no better we gotta change it yeah, just you and me.*

Indeed, the world will not get better just by thinking about it. We need to act and we need a civic awakening to move this city forward, so I earnestly urge you to keep in touch, keep abreast, and keep the faith.

First, keep in touch. The blinds in the mayor's office traditionally have been closed. All of them are open now, and sunlight beams through. My office feels open and accessible. Light streams in on a portrait of Cathay Williams, who was the first and only female Buffalo soldier, and a portrait of young Abe Lincoln as a practicing lawyer entitled "For the Defense." We have given City Hall a bath and early spring cleaning. The floors have been waxed, and the windows and light fixtures have been cleaned. We increased the lighting, and scheduled the front entrance doors to be removed and refurbished in the spring.

These may be just symbols, but they are important symbols – they send a message to residents and visitors about our pride and our approach. They say "we may have challenges, but we aspire to and expect greatness." They say "come on in", which is what I want all of York's citizens and visitors to do, literally and figuratively. Keep in touch. I will continue to encourage a culture of customer service and friendliness among all city employees. So, tell us when we are doing a good job, and tell us when we could be doing better.

Second, keep abreast. I was honored to deliver three speeches in January, as well as provide testimony before the House Majority Policy Committee at Sovereign Bank Stadium. That testimony has evolved into a "Five Open Letters To Harrisburg" series which richly detail the city's fiscal challenges and opportunities, and I strongly encourage you to reflect on these five letters. Our progress, in many ways, is tied to our fiscal situation, and it is important that we educate ourselves, our citizens, and the media on York's fiscal situation in context of the dilemmas faced by small cities throughout our Commonwealth. For copies of that testimony and other speeches I gave during these early days, simply long onto www.yorkcity.org or stop by City Hall.

Further, I invite you to become a delegate of Yorktowne. Simply send an e-mail to info@revyork.com to sign up to receive free e-newsletters and updates on economic and community development initiatives, ways to get involved, and other stimulating news.

Third, keep the faith. We have many opportunities and challenges ahead of us. We will have some rough days and challenging weeks, but remember that this is not just about the city government organization it is about the wonderful place we call "York". Our daily challenges cannot change the magnificent potential of this place, and we need to work just as hard to make this a great place as we do to confront the challenges in our city government. We are all in this together, and I remain exhilarated, focused and excited about our prospects.