

Message from the Mayor #29 10-31-2008

Let's talk about the expansion of the Winfrey Center here in Trenton. As most of you know by now, the Winfrey Center is changing from the institutional model they have used in the past to the group home model suggested by the state. As most of you also know, it has caused quite a stir in Madison County over the past few months. Let me tell you what I have found out about the project and what I think it will mean to Trenton and Gibson County.

The existing Winfrey Center employs over 130 people at the Trenton site. When the new group homes are built, they will add another 35 to 70 jobs in the area. Yes, I just said 35 to 70 jobs. I think we all know what that means in an economy where Maytag-Whirlpool and the Milan Arsenal are cutting back on jobs.

As they purchase additional land in Trenton, that means property tax revenues. The homes are being built at a cost of about \$430,000 apiece and they are attractive, secure and have fenced in back yards to provide for the residents of the homes safety. Many different locations in Trenton were looked at to build and the following locations have been selected and, as far as I know, purchased. Two of the homes are to be built on Eaton Street across from the Freed House where the burned out house is now. Two homes are going on Park Street between Armory and Alcoa. There will be two built on the existing Winfrey Center property and two will be built on the south by-pass across from the Baptist church, Hopkins construction and next to the First Assembly church. I recently was chastised in the Tri-City Reporter for backing the expansion and the suggestion was made that I have two built on either side of my house. Lots on my street were looked at but not selected. I don't know why.

Now, let me tell you how I really feel. I want to say before anything else that I do understand why people are concerned. Anything new adds to our suspicions that something negative can happen. The people we are talking about who will call these facilities home are profoundly mentally retarded. They are not mentally ill, criminally insane or fiends that wander around neighborhoods looking for hapless victims. They are human beings who for the most part spend their lives as happy as clams. I wish we could all say the same. Residents of the Winfrey Center come to City Hall all the time and just hang out in the Teapot Room having fun. They do not cause any trouble, destroy anything or pose a threat to the employees here. Most are gentle human beings whose only problem is the hand they got dealt in life. They deserve, like all of us, a decent, clean and caring place to live their lives. Shouldn't we all feel some responsibility to provide an environment of safety for them? Did you know that there are at least two group homes in Trenton right now? Our police officers also tell me that we have never had bad trouble at the Winfrey Center and it has been here for many, many years.

If you have questions, concerns or comments, I welcome them. You can call me at 855-2013 or e-mail me at trentonmayor@bellsouth.net and I'll try to help you in any way I can.

Many of you have received your utility bills lately and been shocked at the increase. As we told you a few months ago, TVA was going to raise their rates by 20%. This winter is going to be like the rest of the economy, shaky at best. If you are asking what you can do to be able to afford your utility bills this winter, remember those tips that you hear all the time. Set those thermostats down to at least 67 degrees or lower if you can stand it. Put on a sweater around the house or some warmer clothes. You would be amazed at the amount of money it costs you to keep your heat above 65 degrees. Close off parts of your house you don't use or if you don't have insulated windows, put plastic up on the outsides. We have not reached the bad part of winter yet, so if your bill is high now, the worst is yet to come. Get prepared.

Are you recycling your plastics? Remember, we can recycle #1-#7 plastic products now. Look at the bottom of your containers at the arrow triangle and in the middle will be a number. Some of the items this includes are; water bottles, soft drink bottles, milk and juice jugs, plastic wrap, jelly and peanut butter jars, and PVC pipe. Also, remember the bin at the Light and Water Department. The bin at City Hall fills up quickly (which is great, by the way) and there is always room in the bin at the Light and Water Department (which I wish more recyclables were deposited). Let's really boost our efforts and make this program work.

As we enter the holiday season, I am concerned about those who are struggling at this time. Yeah, I know times will get better but we have to get through now. Let's focus on what we can do to make life in Trenton better than it was yesterday. Be positive and be productive and do what you can to be mindful of those around us. We live in a city where people do care. We have our share of knuckleheads, but every place does. The solution is to not let the negative people run our lives. It occurs to me all the time that Trenton isn't perfect but we're working on it. Until next time, God Bless Trenton.

