



Continue from Web Site-→ Let me take a few minutes to talk about what we have done. We have held the line on spending - and actually reduced it. In those first few days, when I realized that the State funding was going to be cut mid-year, we ordered cuts in all departments and all spending stopped except for emergency expenditures. We continued to operate with that mind-set as we put together last year's zero-based budget where the questions to the Department heads were - as they have been this year..."what do you need"....not "what do you want?"....And even with budgets that are this trim, another year of a budget with anticipated union concessions added by the City Council which they didn't always accept even when I presented them with real dollar concessions, as well as another last minute reduction in municipal funding, we are, with the help of the fine work of our Finance Director, anticipating ending the year with no deficit!

How does that happen? How do we make up the loss of over close to two million dollars in the last quarter - and holes in budgets made up of "anticipated" concessions - not to mention a lot of cash out of pocket to deal with a historic flood? I'll tell you how....we made cuts, looked at operational efficiencies, and we rolled up our sleeves with our unions.

Let's start with those efficiencies. One thing I have always prided myself on was being a fair and good manager. I have always believed that you get more from people when you treat them well. And, I believe that has happened here in Cranston. Our Department Directors and division heads constantly put their heads together and join forces to benefit the taxpayers. There is no room for territorial battles and egos. We work as a team - to come up with ways to keep work in-house so that we can avoid costly consulting and contracting fees. Our directors use their private sector experience to ensure that we operate in the most cost-efficient manner. And, because they, too, treat their staff with respect, they have been able to motivate our forces so that they reach their full potential.

And let's talk a bit about our municipal employees. As I mentioned, there were two contracts ratified just ahead of my being mayor - and two that had been in negotiations unsuccessfully during the months prior to my taking office.

I am proud to say that the fruits of those discussions - and a genuine understanding on the part of the labor unions as to how dire the situation is, we have realized nearly 12 MILLION dollars in savings. Now, some of this is short term money - necessary to help carry us through - like giving up holiday pay and clothing allowances - and other parts of these deals include very important pay freezes - in times when there just isn't money for raises - particularly in the larger units. But, perhaps more importantly, is that even though we have talked about these negotiations as concessions based, we have still realized some major structural change - things like the reduction and elimination of health-care buy backs; plan design change that increases the on-site co-pay for very costly emergency room visits - thus encouraging people to seek types of care that will cost the City less money; significant increases in health care co-shares; pending a vote this month, the permanent reduction in the size of our fire department and the civilianizing of the fire dispatch unit; and, maybe most notable, we became the first large community to begin moving away from a defined benefits pension, to a defined contributions retirement plan for all new Teamsters hired and for any current employee with less than five years who so chooses.

But not every success is monetary. I am extremely proud of our track record in other areas. We continue to utilize our CDBG money to help with neighborhood rehabilitation so that the very fiber of our City, the old, charming neighborhoods, remain just that, charming and quaint. But those neighborhoods also deserve to be safe - and the direction in which our police department is answering that call through the implementation of a community based policing model.

And in the midst of great crisis - a historic flood - one of proportions so great that Cranston garnered the attention of National media, people like Fire Chief - who is head our

local EMA stepped up to the plate and helped me lead an operation that led to no loss of life or significant injury - of our own staff - and of all of our 80,000+ residents.

And in the post flood crisis - people like our Building Official and his staff went door to door to inspect people's homes and hand them permits so that they could get started on home construction as soon as possible. Now, our Deputy Director continues to work weekly with FEMA and our Federal delegation to be sure that Cranston gets all of the financial support we deserve from the United States Government. And people like our Planning Director works to ensure that our Hazard Mitigation plans are updated so that we remain eligible for federal reimbursements during future times of crisis.

Through cut-backs, my staff has persevered as well! People like our Treasurer are surviving with less staff, meaning he is willing to roll up his leaves and do everything from overseeing millions of dollars in investments, to sorting mail every day and we have a City Solicitor who gets paid to work 75 days a year (but is in his office five days a week!) and a Deputy Solicitor who is spending way too much time on sewer issues that had been neglected for years. My senior center continues to operate efficiently without a director thanks to our acting co-directors and their hard working staff.

With a team like this - how could we lose? But we have so much more work to do. While I am extraordinarily proud of how we have weathered this most recent financial storm - and worked toward a constant improvement of neighborhoods and greater workplace efficiency, there is so much more that I would like to do.

First, I must continue to undo the wrongs that have plagued our City - past practices that no longer can be considered acceptable. Second, I am committed to continued dialogue with our unions to keep moving forward and expand on the structural changes that we already have realized. I have the utmost respect for of our great employees - but I also know that fiscal issues - particularly permanent reductions in State Aid - are forcing us to change the patterns evident in municipal labor contracts. And, I thank the unions for what

they have done already - many of them are Cranston taxpayers, too.

Finally, there are projects that are long range - and cannot be accomplished in just two years - and when I was elected in 2008, I said that I wanted to shape the future of our great city. High on my priority list is to continue my efforts in education. Yes, it is highly unusual but my fellow Mayors and I are committed to pushing for a fair education funding formula that appropriately follows each and every student based upon their needs – Cranston students deserve no less. I am also committed to establishing a Mayoral Academy - a unique type of charter school offering alternatives to traditional education models. Another top priority is in economic development. Growth is tricky - it has to be balanced against the needs of the residents. But one area in our City is ripe for major changes and that is the Elmwood - Wellington corridor - and I am committed to seeing that area thrive.

But I can't do all of these things - like expanding on our economic base, changing the structure of municipal departments, and ensuring that Cranston's operating budget is solid enough to withstand millions of dollars in permanent reductions without you.....the hardworking people of Cranston....placing your trust in me as you did two years ago. I would be honored to have the opportunity to continue the work that we have started. As you can see, I have a wonderful team of hard-working people - who are dedicated to working with me toward my goals - and I hope that you will place your faith in me once again to be the Mayor of this fine City!!!