

**Mayor Daniel Knapik**  
**From the Mayors Desk**

It's hard to imagine that Thanksgiving is almost here. And as this truly American holiday approaches, we should all take some time over the extended holiday weekend to think of all the things we are thankful for. As we go on with our lives please think of the men and women and families of our Army National Guard 226th Division Army Aviation Support Battalion that are presently deployed in Iraq for the upcoming year. Additionally, elements of the 104<sup>th</sup> fighter wing are also on deployment and are away from their families. We all hope for a safe and speedy return and are truly thankful to these brave citizen soldiers for all they do to ensure our freedom.

And as the first year of my first mayoral term comes to a rapid end, we are going to end 2010 with an impressive set of accomplishments. First let me thank the members of the city council that recently supported the first reading of the bond appropriation for the Park Square Green renovation. And especially thank you to all the citizens that came out to support the project. We had a healthy debate and that is good for our city. It shows that people care.

Some people have called this Mayor Knapik's plan. Well, that couldn't be further from the truth. The planning for the Green renovation goes back nearly a decade. Back then and through the years since then, many people have participated in its final design. Included along the way were two MA DOT public hearings and a number of public meetings held during city board and commission meetings.

In June of this year, I hosted a town meeting at the South Middle School. Over 200 of our fellow citizens attended to hear about the plans for the Green. As reported many times, in the newspapers since then, at the end of the meeting the citizens in attendance voted overwhelmingly to endorse what was called the Platinum option. Since that time, I have showed the Green project in public forums to over 300 additional citizens and the response has always been fantastic. And recently with the endorsement of the Chamber of Commerce members, of which there are over 300 members and the Business Improvement District which represents over 177 businesses in the downtown. Interestingly with the BID, these property owners hold over 100 million dollars in assessed values and signed onto pay additional taxes to enhance the downtown business experience. And if I throw in the informal conversations I have with people and emails, the poll would be easily 85%-15% in favor of the bold new vision for our city center.

Some people say we can't afford to pay for it. They are simply flat out wrong. I have spent a lot of time on the city finances this year and even when needed repairs, a new elementary school and a senior center are

factored into our long term debt structure we are still at a number below the total that we budgeted for in fiscal year 2009. And as I have said many times before, we have one of the most favorable long term debt stories any city could have. Going into this year, moving out eight years from now, the cumulative city debt load as of January 2010 will have been reduced by nearly 85%. I spent over 20 years in private business and that includes 15 years of owning a business and I can tell you first hand I certainly believe I know what I am doing.

Moving on, the city council has a zone change in front of it for approximately 65 acres of city owned land off of Turnpike Way. This property is an ideal candidate for the creation of a small business park that could be home to environmentally friendly businesses. There are a number of similar businesses at the Agawam Business Park off of Silver Street. The zone change and the environmental permitting work is a critical first step to ensuring this parcel will never be used as a landfill, or for 65 houses as some would like. I have said over and over, we need to break the model of big box warehouses in this city and the creation of this park will go along way in accomplishing that.

Additionally this week we should see the demolition of the former Lampson Furniture Warehouse. This is the beginning of the implementation of my promise to you to begin ridding our city center of abandoned buildings. Thank you to the city council for appropriating the money to get this done.

We also hosted a downtown business owners meeting on Monday November 15. Over 40 businesses were in attendance. The concerns aired were mostly around the tough conditions both physically and economically that they have endured. We listened, and will begin to implement what I think are some helpful moves to assist them where we can. But mostly what I would like to say is that it is the collective community that is really in control of their fate. I shop routinely in the downtown area and if every household in the city just spent \$30 or so dollars a month, they would be all better off. The traffic pattern should be improved for the next 4 or 5 months and I challenge all of our citizens to make it a point to come downtown at least once a week to spend some money to help these dedicated merchants.

I know how tough it is, my wife was unemployed for over four months this year and like you all my bills have gone up. There is often very little I can do to ease these burdens on our citizens. However, in keeping with good sound fiscal management, we have managed our city affairs this year in such a way that I have requested, that for this year, the city council slash the property tax rate increase from the traditional 2.5% to 1.5%. Our city faces many challenges ahead, but with prudent planning and continued hard work, we will ride out the storm.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mr. Francis Mitchell who does a fantastic job organizing the Westfield Sportsman's Club annual Black Powder Turkey Shoot. I would also like to thank all of the men and women

who showed up every Sunday to take part. It's a good time and a lot of fun. Luckily for my family, my dad is a better shot than me, so we'll be eating one of his turkeys as once again I was shutout for the season. And as we move towards the holiday season, please join me in the annual city Christmas Tree lighting ceremony. It will be November 29<sup>th</sup> from 4:30PM to 6:00PM at the Athenaeum.

As always if you have any questions call or email me at 413.572.6201 or [mayor@cityofwestfield.org](mailto:mayor@cityofwestfield.org).

Respectfully,

Dan Knapik