

FIRST ANNUAL
STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS



OF

JOSEPH R. PAOLINO, JR.

MAYOR OF PROVIDENCE

IN CITY COUNCIL

JAN 17 1985

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PROVIDENCE CITY COUNCIL

JANUARY 1985



JOSEPH R. PAOLINO, JR.
MAYOR

A VISION OF PRIDE AND PROGRESS FOR PROVIDENCE

Thank you Mr. President.

Honorable members of the City Council, Department Directors, Honorable members of the City Judiciary, Directors and members of municipal boards and commissions, State and local officials, ladies and gentlemen of Providence, having risen from the ranks of the City Council, I am very pleased, for the first time as Mayor, to address this distinguished body. We have served together and enjoy a unique, cooperative relationship that I am confident will continue and grow. You have helped make my transition from this chamber to the Mayor's office easier.

I stand before you tonight to deliver the first annual report of the Mayor on "The State of the City." I come here not to seek approval for what we have accomplished, but to set a progressive agenda for the future, to report on where we have been and where we can go together. As we begin a new year, we inevitably reflect on the past. It has been a memorable year for me, and it has been a memorable year for our city.

We have seen crisis, and we have all felt a new hope.

When I walked into the Mayor's office, I walked in alone, without the benefit of a transitional period or a personal staff prepared to assume the reins of government. When I arrived, I found a city government in disarray. I found a city government where visions of the future were, at best, blurred: visions that consisted not of high aspirations for a new Providence, but rather of a city divided by partisanship, partiality, and power.

I found a crisis of confidence in city government. Now is the time to put that crisis behind us, and look to a future of pride and progress. Together we have the power to embark on a new and exciting adventure in the history of our city. The fabric of our community has been tested, and found to be strong.

Let us recall the eloquent words of Franklin Roosevelt who said: "Small wonder that confidence languishes for it thrives on honesty, on honor, on the sacredness of obligations, on faithful protection, on unselfish performance. Without them confidence

cannot live. The restoration of confidence calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. It asks for action, and action now." I will take that action, and I will not fear to lead or fight in pursuit of excellence. Our city can no longer afford to tolerate mediocrity.

I will not make many promises, but I promise that I will do all that is necessary to rebuild confidence in an honest, modern, and streamlined city government that effectively and efficiently responds to the needs of a changing community.

We are a city in transition, a city on the threshold of a new era of economic and personal development in which diversity is strength, and the proud traditions and rich heritage of our neighborhoods hold the key to success. If we have a clear vision of the future, if we develop a realistic agenda, and if we work together, we can begin to make that vision a reality. We can begin to make Providence an example for the re-urbanization of the industrial northeast, a model for modern urban life. There is much work to be done. We may not see all the fruits of our labor during the next two years, but, if we begin the process now, we can see them in our lifetime.

Let us set a vision of hope and progress for Providence. Let us set a vision of a city where the people of all our neighborhoods, from South Providence to the North End, from the East Side to Federal Hill, from Mt. Pleasant to Silver Lake, can live and work in a single spirit of community. It has been said that cities are not just housing and stores, not just schools and factories, parks and theaters, banks and shops. Cities are places where men and women should be able to raise their families in dignity, security, and harmony ... where the great achievements of modern life and the ageless pleasures afforded by natural beauty are available to all.

However, visions do not come cheaply. We must be willing to take bold new steps and make tough fiscal decisions if we want our city to be great again, if we want to rebuild and maintain a high quality of life for ourselves, our families, and our children's families. But before we can even dare to dream of greatness, we must ensure that government is modern enough to accommodate change, wise enough to build a sound and equitable framework for it, and strong enough to fight for it. Since I became your Mayor, I have dared to dream, and I have begun to fight.

THE PROVIDENCE MANAGEMENT STUDY

When the Providence Management Study Team presented their report to me on August 23rd, they told me that my actions and the actions of the City Council during the next ninety days would set the tone, and influence the long-term success or failure of efforts to strengthen management practices so desperately needed in the city. We have implemented their recommendations in the hope that city government would be removed from the selfish grasp of those who, in the past, have exploited it, and returned to competent professionals who could restore confidence in its functions and ready them for the future. With a vision of hope and progress for Providence, I began the implementation procedures proposed by RIPEC and the Management Study Team. I hired a Director of Implementation, established an Implementation Office, and set the wheels of change in motion.

My first task was to recruit competent, professional, creative men and women who would bring imagination and vitality to a dying and disgraced city government. I am proud to see seated here tonight what I believe to be the most professional, competent, and creative department directors that this city has ever had. I know that they share my vision for the future of Providence and are dedicated to the restoration of honest and responsive government to the people of this city.

Under my leadership and the direction of these professionals, many of the Management Study Recommendations have been implemented since I became your Mayor. With the implementation of these recommendations, we have begun the long overdue process of bringing city government into the twentieth century and readying it for the twenty-first.

We have begun the process of streamlining management systems, which, in the past, were developed and maintained to hide and condone mediocrity rather than ensure excellence. We have begun the process of restoring confidence in government by developing a purchasing procedures manual that will establish a clear and concise standard and code of ethics for the city, for contractors, and for vendors. We have begun the process of restoring confidence in government by developing a personnel procedures manual that will establish long overdue standards and a code of ethics for city employees and provide management with a clear and concise job performance guideline against

which the work of all city employees can be judged. We have begun the process of restoring confidence in government by developing an employee handbook that will establish, as has never been done before, exactly what a city employee is entitled to and exactly what is expected of that employee. And we have begun the process of restoring confidence in government by developing a budget procedures manual that will finally establish written guidelines for the development of budget information that is consistent in form and objective from department to department. These fundamental documents never existed in city government.

And plans are underway to improve the city's record keeping functions by developing a sound data processing program for the city. Never again will city records or city property be lost or misappropriated through negligence, malfeasance, or criminal misconduct.

Additionally, we have initiated the reorganization and consolidation of departments of city government, and we have developed drafts of fourteen recommended charter revisions which I will be submitting to you in the next ninety days. These revisions will ensure that the functions of city government will be not only efficient and effective but flexible enough to respond to change.

In implementing the recommendations of RIPEC and the Management Study Team, we have taken the first step in a dynamic process to make city government responsive to the changing needs of its people.

With these new and responsive management tools in place, we now have the means and the opportunity to adequately address the crisis of confidence that existed and the unique ability to ensure that the failures of the past will never again be repeated. The departments and agencies of city government, under the professional leadership of these dedicated administrators, have risen from beneath the burdensome weight of years of corruption and indifference.

I am proud to report to you tonight that the state of the city is good, and it is improving because we have built a professional team of dedicated public officials who have taken action to restore confidence in the ability of government to function fairly, effectively, efficiently, and in the best interest of all our citizens.

I am proud to say that the state of the city is good because government has been passed to a new breed of proud professionals who dare to dream of a great and prosperous city.

PURCHASING REFORM

In the area of Purchasing, where questionable past practices brought doubt and skepticism, I have initiated steps to restore integrity to the department and the process. I began by appointing an acting purchasing director who, in her first few months, moved so quickly to take the necessary action, that the Rhode Island Association of Municipal Purchasing Agents awarded her the distinguished service award for restoring confidence to the profession.

Before I took office, the Management Study Team said that the city's purchasing practices were inefficient, ineffective, and counterproductive. Since then we have taken all necessary steps to open the process and restore confidence in the methods and procedures of the department, including the initiation of a code of purchasing ethics.

We are paying our bills quicker. In some cases we are paying within thirty days rather than one hundred and twenty days or more. We have dramatically decreased unauthorized department purchases and have established blanket purchasing procedures. And we have developed and implemented a system to attract new vendors to the formal bidding process to ensure a diverse and open competitive bidding process.

But we have only begun. During the next few months, I will seek to establish the Purchasing division as a separate department of city government. I will seek to develop, maintain, and update an effective list of vendors. I will seek to computerize purchasing activities and records to make the department responsive to the needs of a modern city. And I will be working with you to seek to dissolve the Board of Contract and Supply, replacing it with a smaller more manageable body that will oversee large city expenditures more efficiently.

The people of this city must be confident that the business of government is good business. That government is doing all that it can to ensure that high standards and fair, equitable procedures are honestly and consistently applied in the quest for quality.

CHANGE IN PUBLIC WORKS

In the past the Department of Public Works has exemplified governmental inaction, indifference, and incompetence. In the short time since I have been Mayor, we have already begun to erase its past reputation as the laughing stock of the city, the state, and the nation. We have already initiated sweeping changes to turn this department into what it should be, the well oiled machine that makes the city run.

The story has often been told that when Peter Granieri first went to work for the department twenty years ago, pigeons were nesting in the rafters of the public works garage, and the sprinklers didn't work. Well, Peter cleaned out the nesting pigeons, and he repaired the inoperable sprinkler system before he went on to a brilliant career in public works throughout the state. When he agreed to come back to the city and began his new assignment, the first thing he told me was that the pigeons were nesting again, and the sprinklers were in worse shape than he had found them twenty years ago. I told him that history has a funny way of repeating itself and that he should get to work.

I told him that I wanted to make the Department of Public Works a model for the efficient delivery of city services to the people of Providence. I told him that I wanted to improve the inventory system that maintains and updates the serial numbers for everything from cranes to wheelbarrows, pile drivers to screwdrivers. I told him that never again did I want to hear that pigeons were the only things left in the city garage. I told him that we had to find a way to replace abused, broken, and badly maintained equipment within the restraints of the budget. I asked him to investigate lease purchase plans to lessen the financial burdens of rebuilding from the past.

From department to department we are making changes. We are building a modern city government from antiquated and broken remnants.

PROGRESS IN PERSONNEL

When I took office, I saw a city personnel system and labor relations function in chaos. I found a dramatic lack of appropriate supervision, a lack of record keeping and documentation, and a lack of system checks and balances. I found low morale and poor

attitudes among dedicated employees. I found a lack of administrative accountability, and a total absence of training programs and staff development procedures, to say nothing of no-show workers and general personnel practices that would make any businessman cringe. We have fought in court against the no-show workers, and those practices have been eliminated.

Personnel records and staff that were previously scattered among city offices are being consolidated in one central personnel office. All personnel functions have been centralized and placed in the competent and professional hands of a new director of personnel. All personnel policies and programs now flow directly from the director and the Mayor.

Since I became Mayor, the EEO/Affirmative Action Office has been incorporated into the central personnel office to ensure the consistent application of equitable policies and procedures. Since I became Mayor, I have reorganized the city's Affirmative Action Committee and have given that body a new mandate to carry out the recruitment, hiring, and training goals of our Affirmative Action Plan in a meaningful, substantive, and equitable way.

And when I became Mayor, I broke from the past by requiring that the summer jobs program, long a vehicle for abuse and favoritism, be staffed by means of a lottery system to ensure equal treatment for all applicants. I encouraged minority participation, and through that effort we saw a dramatic increase in the level of minority hiring in the program.

In the coming months, as contract negotiations are initiated, I will seek the participation of all department directors. I will formulate a tough, fair policy that will ensure the delivery of city services to the people of this city. I have made the decision to replace an open-ended and expensive labor relations contract with a new labor lawyer who will do better work for less money. I have appointed a deputy director of personnel for labor relations, who will be asked to immediately begin a training program for all department directors and supervisory staff on personnel procedures. And I will seek to broaden promotional opportunities with effective training and staff development programs for all city employees. Additionally, I will seek to develop a long overdue computerized system for the maintenance of all city personnel files and records.

We are making changes. The list is long, and the process is slow. We must be patient. We must hold firm in our commitment to the restoration of the people's faith in the men and women who serve them.

RESTORING PUBLIC PROPERTY

We must be willing to hold true to the course of unselfish performance in pursuit of excellence. I have held true to that course in restoring integrity to the department of public property.

We are beginning to address the problems of the effects of time on our outdated and neglected buildings, equipment, and vehicles. I am seeking to recruit and hire a competent and experienced fleet manager to develop and implement a comprehensive fleet management and maintenance program. I am seeking to develop a capital improvement program in the area of public property to raise to acceptable standards all city facilities, vehicles, and equipment.

Additionally, I will be submitting to you a charter revision to streamline and modernize the entire area of Public Property as the new General Services Administration.

NEW PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSIONER AND CITY SOLICITOR

And to enhance the development of programs that will ensure the safety and welfare of all our citizens, I have appointed a new Public Safety Commissioner, a dedicated and competent public servant who will be working closely with me in coordinating all aspects of public safety with the needs of each neighborhood. I know that under his leadership, and with the addition of a new fourth shift of 20 police officers, Providence will be a safe city where both residents and potential developers can feel secure in the safety of their personal and economic interests.

Where government was cumbersome, we have sought to consolidate and streamline functions. I have appointed a new City Solicitor and Deputy City Solicitor who will lead our efforts to enhance the city's ability to address legal concerns efficiently

and economically. I have instructed them to reduce the number of part-time legal advisers and consolidate city legal services, saving the city in excess of \$100,000.

CHANGES IN PARKS AND RECREATION

To further streamline cumbersome government functions, I will seek a charter revision to consolidate the Department of Public Parks and the Department of Recreation into a new Department of Parks and Recreation. This new department will effectively and efficiently centralize and better coordinate the existing programs and responsibilities of both departments.

PROGRESS IN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

And I am establishing a Department of Planning and Development that physically and administratively combines the Mayor's Office of Community Development, the Office of Economic Development, and the Department of Planning and Urban Development.

I see this new department as not only the centerpiece for growth but the lens through which we can see and focus on the future. The department will be many-faceted and broad-based and will link a new and modern city government with the neighborhoods of Providence. I see, within this new department, a division for neighborhood development, in which planners will be assigned to neighborhood activities and available to address neighborhood concerns.

In this regard, I have already asked the new Director of Development to work on several specific programs designed to assist in the potential development of neighborhoods. It is through our efforts to build a spirit of community in our neighborhoods that the future development of the entire city depends. We must be able to successfully combine the downtown revitalization and industrial development with the needs of our neighborhoods ... to draw each of our neighborhoods together into the center through jobs as well as development.

I have instructed the director to investigate programs to preserve home ownership. We must provide our citizens with

not only the reason but the ability to live in Providence again. I have asked that a program be developed to assist families of modest means to own their own homes in Providence. The housing rehabilitation and paint programs, long associated with waste, political favoritism, and sloppy work, are being dismantled. Our neighborhood improvement program will be reorganized and professionally administered within the department's new neighborhood development division.

Under this new department, I will seek to bring jobs back to the neighborhoods of Providence. In the last twenty years, though plans have been discussed, no new industrial parks have been built in our city. Accordingly, we will soon start construction of the new Silver Spring Industrial Park, and we will be looking at a much needed industrial development on the site of the Roger Williams Housing project.

And, under this new department, I will seek to establish a new and lasting bond between city government and the colleges and universities in Providence. The changing needs of our city will require input from experts who have long been available to us. I will seek to draw on the talents of economists, scientists, sociologists, historians, planners, designers, engineers, and artists who can provide a new direction in city programs, policies, and plans.

This is a bold and imaginative development program that will require tough decisions, hard work, and the ability to recover from slow progress and countless obstacles. But I believe that, beyond the glamorous revitalization of the downtown area, we need to look to our neighborhoods for renewed strength. I pledge to you tonight to explore every opportunity for potential development in the city within the limits of sound environmental planning, historic concerns, and neighborhood growth. Accordingly, I am ordering tonight the establishment of a land bank information system to inventory city-owned real property. This system will be designed to allow potential developers to know what city-owned land is available and how it can be acquired. And, in cooperation with the people of the neighborhoods and neighborhood leaders, we will be actively marketing these parcels of city land.

Additionally, in all my discussions with potential developers, the most common concern has been whether or not we have a plan for our city, an overall development plan that is dynamic in concept and design, recognizing the need for continuous change.

Accordingly, I have instructed the Director of Development to begin to develop such a plan for the downtown area. I have told him that I want it by the spring. I have told him that I want it to be a clear, concise, and immediately usable inventory of downtown, and an assessment of what the city must do to create a downtown residential neighborhood that will bring new life to the entire downtown area. This professional and dynamic approach to planning and development is already beginning to attract new interest in our city.

We can only set the wheels of change in motion, but if we do not have the imagination to do even that, then we have nothing.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMITMENT

As we seek to make the changes necessary to a prosperous future, we must look to the people of our neighborhoods for our direction and our strength. I have promised, and I have already begun to reach out to the neighborhoods where the rich heritage and proud traditions of the past, and the dreams of the future are bound together in the present. I want the people of Providence to know that, under my administration, we will have a City Hall without walls, a government open to all the people, a government built on policies, programs, and services that the people of our neighborhoods want and need. There will be differences of opinion. There will be concerns important to some and not to others. But we must be open enough to allow disagreement and the constant testing of ideas if we are to respond to the needs of the community at large.

I have gone to the neighborhoods. I have listened to the problems of safety and crime. I have spoken with an elderly woman in Manton Heights who had her pocketbook stolen and feels she can no longer safely walk the streets of the neighborhood where she grew up. In Smith Hill, where youth gangs aimlessly roam the streets at night, I spoke with leaders who discussed programs that bring police and neighborhood youths closer together. We spoke of the development of a police athletic league, and I have instructed Chief Mancuso to look into the potential of such programs in Providence. I believe to lead effectively, I must know, first hand, the fears and frustrations, the desires and needs, hopes and dreams of our diverse neighbors in this changing city. I am reminded of the moving words of Jesse Jackson who said: "A leader must be tough enough to fight, tender enough to cry, human enough to make mistakes, humble

enough to admit them, strong enough to absorb the pain, and resilient enough to bounce back.”

I intend to be the neighborhood leader of the Providence community.

Accordingly, I am announcing tonight the formation of the Mayor’s Neighborhood Council. This Council will be led by me and will consist of the directors of public works, public safety, recreation, finance, and development, the police chief, fire chief, the school superintendent, the superintendent of parks, the city solicitor, the tax assessor, the traffic engineer, and the building inspector. I will be taking members of this Council into each neighborhood during the coming year to meet with the people and address their specific concerns. People will have direct access to me and to each department director to let us know what must be done. Accordingly, I am announcing tonight that the first neighborhood meeting will be on January 28th with the people of Mt. Pleasant. I will be at Mt. Pleasant High School with my department directors from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. to discuss neighborhood problems. I will be holding at least one meeting each month in different neighborhoods.

COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

And finally, if we are to pass the rich heritage of our neighborhoods and our city to future generations, we must renew our commitment to a strong and effective public school system. Our investment in public education is an affirmation of our belief in our vision for a new Providence. No public investment is more important than the investment we make in developing the minds and the skills of our children. We must remember that, though excellence comes with a high price tag, in the long run, mediocrity will cost us much more. I have appointed to the School Board new members whose diversity and expertise in business as well as education enhance our efforts to ensure that proper management practices are implemented in pursuit of excellence in education.

THE FUTURE OF PROVIDENCE

I have spoken tonight about restoring confidence in the ability of government to fairly, efficiently, and effectively re-

spond to the changing needs of a city in transition. Since I have become your Mayor, we have begun the process, a process that is the first and most essential step toward a bright future. I have spoken about my vision of what Providence can be. It is the vision not of a dreamer, but of a businessman and citizen who owes his living to the city. It is a vision of a city in which government is wise enough to draw on the experience of the governed. A city in which all sectors of the community — government, business, labor, universities, and neighborhood groups and organizations — rise together to the challenges of modern urban life. It is vision of a city in which government understands and appreciates the lessons of the past in building the community of the future.

I see a beautiful city with a modern downtown residential neighborhood that will sustain a new and expanded business district. A place where we can raise our families with pride in the natural beauty of a modern urban center where the quality of life is the envy of many. I see a city that recalls the glory of its past when it began to build along the east side of the Great Salt River — now the Providence River — with dwellings along South Main Street, and wharves, and landings along Fox and India Points. I see a city that recalls the prosperity of maritime activities centered along Great Salt Cove and marked by the building of Market House in 1733. I see a city that opens its waterfront once again. I see a city where potential developers are attracted by natural beauty as well as prosperity. In recent weeks I have worked with state and local officials to discuss potential funding for the river relocation project, and I look forward to working closely with our congressional delegation, our state officials, and with you, the City Council, on all matters that concern the future of our city.

I am enthusiastic about the future. The possibilities are bounded only by the limits of our imaginations. For those who believe we cannot change the course of our city, that it is an expensive and wild dream, let me say this: a good business leader can't wait for every last fact to be in, for every guarantee to be made before he chooses a direction. At some point he must take what Lee Iaccoca calls a "leap of faith." I am now willing to take that leap of faith on this project, and I will be looking closely with you at the entire waterfront development project.

I know that we can embark on a new and exciting adventure for this city. As I have said, it may not be concluded during the next two years, but I am confident that we will see a new

Providence in our lifetime. The work has already begun. I see the beginning of the total revitalization of downtown,— the Kennedy Plaza Project, the new Fleet Building, the Capital Center Project, the Promenade Industrial Center, and Corliss Landing. I see what this city can be.

As we set our vision of pride and progress, we have a great advantage. We have thousands of invisible strands of common purpose and experience that tie us together. This bond is expressed in words like “neighborhood” and “community,” and it is felt in the hearts of all of us. We share the history of ideas and events, of diversity set in a common place. The rich and proud Italian heritage that I so deeply cherish is as closely bound to the past and future of this great city as the rich and proud heritage of others. My wife Lianne and I are as proud of our neighborhood and family traditions as each of you are of yours. And together we can build one true spirit of community from that individual pride.

It is true that every man must have his own vision of things to come. But, as Robert Kennedy said, “the future is not a gift, it is an achievement. Every generation helps make its own future. This is the essential challenge of the present.” With your help, I am willing to accept that challenge. Together we can make Providence America’s best city.

Thank you and good night.