

BUDGET MESSAGE - MAY 1, 1986

Honorable Members of the City Council:

Tonight I come before you to present for your consideration the Budget of the City of Providence for 1986-1987. It is a responsible and honest budget.

This budget reflects my priorities as Mayor: namely, improved neighborhood services and an honest and efficient administration of City government.

Less than two years ago when I became Mayor, I inherited a troubled City --

-- a City without proper management controls concerning purchasing and expenditures, a City that could not deliver basic city services, a City that had lost the confidence of the people it served.

One year ago, I stood before you and presented a budget that focused on basic reorganization of our City departments and illustrated my vision of the changing role of city government.

We had to first rebuild public confidence in our ability to manage our City by changing management teams, by modernizing antiquated purchasing and personnel systems, and by providing departments with the necessary tools they so desperately needed.

I accepted that challenge as the cornerstone of my commitment to good government in the City of Providence

Now that our house is in order, I am able to pursue my goal of providing services to our neighborhoods and revitalizing the fabric of our community.

This year, I am proposing a budget that I believe is an accurate representation of what we truly need to take the next step on the course we have set for our City.

We have employed a professional budget process which has allowed us to consider all departmental needs, evaluate each line item, and ultimately make the tough decisions that must be made to keep Providence fiscally sound and moving in the right direction.

I believe this proposed budget is a result of a competent, responsible and businesslike decision making process. This is a budget which allows our professional and streamlined government to effectively and efficiently provide the best services at the least possible cost to the taxpayers of Providence.

This process has allowed us to economize City government, giving the people of Providence more value for their tax dollar. This budget of \$188,209,024 is only 4.2% higher than the 1985-86 amount of \$180,676,034. In addition, we have reduced the number of positions in the City's payroll by more than 20.

Tonight I take pride in proposing to you a budget with no tax increase.

I take pride in this budget because it holds the line on taxes and allows me to set in motion my Five-Year Neighborhood Agenda.

This budget provides for the needs of the people of Providence, needs that I have learned first-hand at the neighborhood meetings throughout the City.

I take pride in this budget because it is based on a budgetary ethic in this administration that is guided by professionalism and honesty and built upon sound judgement, good planning, common sense, and a vision for the future.

It is a progressive and innovative budget that attempts to offset potential federal revenue losses through better management and control of expenditures, better collection of revenue, and use of alternative revenue sources.

Through my legislative proposals currently before the General Assembly, we have sought additional funding that, if received, would allow us to channel more funds to further increase neighborhood services. Such legislative proposals include funding for the Providence Public Library, Roger Williams Park, and payments in lieu of taxes on the tax exempt institutions.

Make no mistake, the strength of Providence is in its neighborhoods.

My priority, as contained in my State of the City Message, is the delivery of quality services to our neighborhoods. I have visited each and every neighborhood with my department directors, listening to the problems the people in our neighborhoods are experiencing. Listening to you, my neighbors, I have heard your concern for police protection and quick fire response as well as good schools, clean streets and fine parks.

As your Mayor, I promise you I will continue to listen and respond to your concerns throughout my tenure.

In 1985, I concentrated on rebuilding the internal workings of a City government that was in turmoil. This year, we have begun to enjoy the benefits that have come from that reorganization. As I travel throughout Providence, the people of our neighborhoods are telling me that they have seen an improvement in the delivery of City services. But, I want to do even better and we will do so.

In the area of Public Safety, my goal is to have a full complement of police and fire officers. This proposed budget calls for the formation of new police and fire schools. This should ensure that protection against crime and prompt responsive fire and rescue services are provided to the people of Providence.

In addition, 30 new police vehicles are to be added to the fleet along with police and fire radios to improve communications and response time. I am asking that we provide funds to continue to refurbish existing fire department equipment and that we enter lease purchase agreements for new equipment including four pumpers and a new rescue unit.

This budget calls for a reallocation of resources to ensure that our neighborhood parks will be better maintained and become a priority of the Parks Department. We have provided funds and instituted the necessary systems to better maintain the land we own together.

I have provided for personnel and equipment for the City's Parks Department and have ordered radios to be installed in our Parks Department vehicles. This will allow for more efficient and productive use of our Parks Department personnel as they maintain the nearly 150 parks in our neighborhoods.

This budget continues the Camp Cronin recreation programs for our senior citizens and provides adequate funding to ensure the continuation of our summer youth programs and the improved maintenance of our pools and recreation centers.

This year, pools in the City will be opened from the Fourth of July weekend through Labor Day, a full ten weeks, to allow our neighborhood children full enjoyment of the summer months.

This year we began a change in the way the Department of Public Works operated. For the first time in years, the City was ready and able to respond to snowstorms.

We sanded and cleaned every street in the City. I have heard comments from people that they had not seen sanders in over 10 years.

The purchase of five new trucks as well as other vehicles will enable the City to better handle minor snowstorms and will reduce the need to call in private snow removal contractors.

The City also recently awarded a Street Sweeping contract, which is provided for in this budget. We are seeing the changes first-hand. In fact, one woman even told me that her 12-year old son never knew what a street cleaner looked like.

In addition, cleaning of vacant lots, removal of abandoned vehicles, and cleaning of catch basins are programs which will be enhanced in this year's budget by committing resources to attack these neighborhood problems.



Over 4,000 street signs will be installed throughout the City as a result of funds appropriated in the 1986-1987 budget.

Nearly 400 crosswalks as well as one thousand stop signs, one-way signs and other traffic signs will be installed throughout the City.

This year, the City will install beacon signal lights for pedestrians at several senior citizen highrises, ensuring the safety of our elderly. The City will also begin a refurbishment of the decorative streetlights that have been damaged on Atwells Avenue and Benefit Street.

As we all know, the education of our youth is a vitally important function of City government. Your children and mine orhoods are the best investment we can make for our City's future. Therefore, I am recommending that the School Department receive \$75,337,106. which represents a 5.7% increase.

The Providence Public Library is one of the City's and State's most precious resources. As a center for learning and enjoyment, it provides a valuable service to our State's citizens as well as to the people of our neighborhoods.

Therefore, I am proposing to increase the City's allocation to the library by 5% for a total appropriation of over one million dollars.

The image of our City is changing. I want to help that change by continuing the development and revitalization of our entire City. Accordingly, this budget enables us to begin a marketing program to show the unique quality of life that exists in our neighborhoods and the exciting economic developments occurring throughout the City.

Changes in our neighborhoods are more easily visible to us than the changes inside government, but believe those internal changes are just as important.

It is important for our City employees to know how to effectively and efficiently handle requests for assistance from the public so that people will enjoy and not dread coming to City Hall. That is why I have included funds in the budget to continue customer training for our employees. It is important for our Probate Court to be able to provide copies of wills, legal documents and requested public records within a reasonable period of time and that is why I have asked for a copy machine to be purchased for the Court.

In addition, the restoration of Mayoral portraits will begin in conjunction with our City's 350th Anniversary celebration. A new glass door on the front of City Hall, enabling people to enter the building year-round from our recently renovated Kennedy Plaza, will be the most visible change. Let these doors be looked upon as representing honest and open government.

This budget contains our second payment in the five-year program we initiated to eliminate the City's cumulative deficit. As always, I will be working with you, the members of the City Council, to determine how any additional State aid would be applied to the budget, whether it be used for a further reduction of our inherited cumulative deficit or applied to capital development improvement projects.

This is, once again, a budget that truly reflects the needs of a growing city faced with change and uncertainty at the federal level.

We have considered the many needs of our City and have made the difficult decisions.

I am proud to say that through efficient and professional management practices, I am able to propose a budget that increases services, holds the tax line, sets our neighborhood agenda in motion, and lets us continue on the course of pride and progress we have set for the people of Providence.

We are a City proudly headed into the future.

Providence has begun its renaissance, and it is our responsibility to continue forging our hopes into reality.

As we embark on this new era, we must be guided by a common sense and purpose that allows us to provide the people of Providence with the best possible government at the lowest possible cost. Together I am confident we can achieve this vision for Providence...

...surely, the people of Providence deserve no less.