

City Ends 2010 In The Black

Jonesboro, AR – Jonesboro Mayor Harold Perrin and his Chief Financial Officer Ben Barlyske shared year end financial information with members of the City Council Finance Committee that showed the city finished 2010 over \$2.7 million dollars to the good. The original 2010 budget had called for a nearly \$5 million dollar deficit.

The bulk of the savings came from pushing many large capital projects forward because they weren't going to be completed, accounting for just over \$2 million dollars worth of black ink. However, a significant portion of the carryover, some \$738,000, was in the Operating & Maintenance Budget (O&M). "The credit goes to the department heads and the employees," Mayor Perrin said in a prepared statement. "We had anticipated a deficit of just over \$2.2 million in O&M, but thanks to the hard work and management of our team we came in with a fiscal year surplus of almost three-quarter of a million dollars."

The savings, according to Perrin and Barlyske, were in key categories where sound financial management made the difference. "The bulk of the money was saved in salaries, fixed assets, supplies, travel, training and other areas where we had control of our expenditures. We can't control the cost of fuel, but we can only buy the things we need when we need them, limit unnecessary travel, and find ways to be more productive and efficient instead of increasing payroll," Perrin said. "That's what they did. We empowered them to manage their department and their budget and they did an incredible job."

Perrin said that even though he was proud of their accomplishments, the work is far from over. "We've still got a lot to do. Some of that money still needs to be spent. The capital improvement projects just moved into 2011 and 2012, they didn't go away. Some of the key personnel savings were in the police department (approximately \$400,000 in savings) because we worked short for several months waiting to see what the public was going to do in regard to the public safety tax. It passed, and we've been staffing back up. So the pressure to perform through sound fiscal policy and day to day management is as high as ever."

Perrin likened last years budgetary success to the old English idiom made famous by Benjamin Franklin. "A penny saved is a penny earned," Perrin said. "When you look at a budget that is as complex as the City of Jonesboro's, with the breadth and depth of everything that it takes in, it's truly about managing the details. When you can save a penny here, a dollar there, it all adds up over the course of 12 months in a nearly \$50 million dollar operation.

"I just cannot say enough good things about the team we've put together over the last couple of years and how they are managing the taxpayer's money. We will continue to work hard and look for more creative ways to deliver the kind of service they expect with the fiscal responsibility they deserve. I am thankful daily that I have the opportunity to work in such a great city."