

**STATE OF THE CITY
WILMINGTON, OHIO
JANUARY 21, 2010**

“Faith is taking the first steps, even when you don’t see the whole staircase,” ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

Mr. President, Members of Council, Distinguished Elected and Appointed Officials, Guests, and Fellow Citizens:

The year 2010 may have been the most momentous year in our history. The word “history” is most important here because 2010 was the 200th anniversary of the founding of Wilmington and Clinton County. Our hats are off to Debbie Stamper and the Bicentennial Commission,

and the thousands of people who participated in the many events, activities, and celebrations. It was not a carnival; it was a year-long celebration of our heritage, our history, and our commitment to our future by building on our past. I cannot mention all the events or thank all the people involved, except to say that this was a



Mayor David Raizk and wife, Mary Ann, ringing in the bicentennial at the Clinton County Courthouse

celebration truly worthy of the citizens of Clinton County.

The year 2010 saw the gifting of the Wilmington Air Park to the community in June. It is said that the days of doing business on a handshake, where a man’s word is his bond, are gone. But I can tell you that the commitment that John Mullen made to me on May 28, 2008, to donate the Air Park never wavered. It did, however, have to navigate some pretty tricky and dangerous waters. There are not enough words to express our thanks to John Limbert, CEO of National Bank & Trust and Chairman of the Port Authority, whose expertise, savvy, and due diligence navigated those difficult waters and made the donation of the Air Park a reality. John, the citizens owe you a debt we cannot repay. Thank you.



At the beginning of the DHL crisis, Commissioner Randy Riley said he would “kiss the top of the mayor’s head” if the mayor could help facilitate the donation of the Air Park back to the people of this community. This picture was taken during the announcement of the official transfer of the Wilmington Air Park from DHL to the Clinton County Port Authority. .

Joe Hete, CEO of ATSG, is another person who deserves our thanks. He committed to me in Washington, on a handshake, to keep his business here at the Air Park. This meant the Air Park never went dark, and the growing business of AMES and other units is a real foundation for job creation.



Mayor David Raizk in Washington, D.C.

We also welcome Kevin Carver. Kevin has been invested with us since Memorial Day weekend 2008 as Regional Director of the Ohio Department of Development. He has worked right alongside us through some of our darkest hours and now brings his considerable talents to us full-time as Executive Director of the Air Park.

2010 brought orange barrels to Wilmington. And while many of you hope you never see another one, we were able to install or replace miles and miles of curb, gutter, sidewalk, driveway pads, and pavement on Locust, Main, South and Xenia. Some of the sidewalk we replaced was put in by the WPA (Works Progress Administration), which was a federal program from the late 1930s and early 1940s. This 4.5 million dollar project, funded entirely by The Stimulus Act, has greatly improved the appearance and the safety of our community, at no cost to the city or the property owners. Another major project was the reconstruction of Nelson Avenue with curb, gutter, storm sewer, a new roadbed, and... Surprise – some sidewalk! This upgrade of our most westerly north-south connector will not only support the residential traffic but commercial and industrial growth as well.

This brings us to another major project: the acquisition of the Randall-Textron facility. It seems folly to acquire a 62-acre abandoned industrial complex in the face of crippling job losses in our community. But with the help of grants from the Clean Ohio Fund for acquisition and environmental remediation, we will soon have a facility and a new industry that will create good jobs in our community.

Buy why even attempt any of this, given the hard times our community has and is still suffering? Because we have faith... the faith that Dr. King spoke about: faith in our heritage, faith in our community, and faith in each other. Our forefathers knew that if you weren't moving forward, you were standing still; and if you were standing still, you were falling behind. They had the faith to keep taking those steps forward, even though they couldn't see the whole staircase. We must continue that tradition and that faith. Two hundred years of history demands it.

The State of the City is safe, secure and financially sound. For the first time in 27 years, the city will have a new treasurer. Geoffrey Phillips will be taking his skills and talents to the office of County Treasurer. In a way, he won't be leaving us at all, as he will still be collecting our taxes! Geoff, congratulations and good luck in your new position, and as to your city service, we say, "Well done!"

Wait a minute! Did you say financially sound? What about these "budget deficits" I've heard about? Last year at this time, our budget projected a \$2,000,000 deficit to the carryover. I said we would have to cut \$800,000 to \$1,000,000 out of that deficit. At the end of the year, we had reduced the projected deficit from \$2,000,000 to \$900,000. Yes, we had to lay people off. It was the worst time of my life. I tried for two years to avoid layoffs, with wage and step-increase freezes, but when the budget is 80% personnel, it was inevitable. After ten years of unprecedented growth, building up departments and adding staff, we were faced with right-sizing staff to deal with the decrease in revenue

and in service. But, there is some reason for hope. Because of the herculean effort to control costs, we will begin 2012 with the largest carryover since 2005, without Air Park revenue. We have always said it was about 2012. The actions taken since 2008 were to try to position us for sustainable operations in 2012. The real stars of this effort are our supervisors. I want to take this opportunity to thank them. It is not just a job for them, as some have said. They have taken ownership of not just their departments, but of the City and the people to whom they provide service. It is their creativity and hard work and diligence that have resulted in our budget savings, without any tax increase or reduction in service. And we fully expect their effort to continue to reduce our budget in 2011. They understand, as I do, that it's not just about cost-cutting or balanced budgets, but about stewardship. Stewardship is using our limited resources to provide the best service we possibly can to the citizens of Wilmington. The citizens don't provide us revenue for a savings account. They want top quality service; they deserve nothing less. Our only agenda is the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Wilmington and the services needed to support them. There can be no other.

To that end, all of our employees have had no cost of living increases or step increases since 2008. Given the increase in living costs over the last three years, that amounts to a significant pay cut. Yet, they continue to give maximum effort to serve the citizens and I thank them. Additionally, they have given 77 days of voluntary furlough to help our efforts, even though this negatively impacts their retirement. Why? Because they care about our community and its citizens. For this reason...because they are good stewards of both the resources and the trust the citizens have given us and because they have faith that tomorrow will be brighter, I stand with them. To that goal, we are "all in!" As a result of everyone's efforts and creative new sources of revenue, we will shortly be looking at the possibility of recalling some of our safety personnel. I am committed to two things in 2011: no additional layoffs and no tax increases.

I want to thank Auditor David Hollingsworth and especially Deputy Auditor Mary Kay Vance for working with the administration during these strident financial times. Their hard work and creative engagement has been invaluable in showing a little light at the end of the tunnel. I wish to thank the members of Council, especially those who stood together when it wasn't popular to make sure the city ran smoothly. Additionally, I wish to thank Laura Curliss. Laura is the in-house administrator of our third downtown grant, and wrote the successful grant application. Grant-writing was a service we formerly paid for, so this was a tremendous savings for the City. Also, without her talents, we would have never been able to navigate the Clean Ohio grants necessary for the Randall-Extron project. Laura, our hats are off to you. Finally, Andrea Tacoronte, our first line of defense for the administration and the council, we thank you.

Wilmington stands at the crossroads. We can stand still, we can go backwards, or we can have the faith to take those steps forward. None of us can see the rest of the staircase, but let's have faith in each other and in our community. Let's collaborate, not criticize. Let's strive for consensus, not antagonism. The example for us is 200 years old. Our founders took those steps, believing where they could not prove. Let's honor our heritage and their example and continue to take those steps forward. There are tremendous opportunities ahead of us, if only we have the faith to engage the future. And, if we have enough faith, maybe we'll get a peek at the whole staircase.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Raizk', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David L. Raizk