



# Daily Times Herald

## CARROLL, IOWA

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

## Condition of the City: Mayor says take pride in progress, prepare for challenging 2009

### Staff Reports

Wednesday, January 14, 2009



Mayor Jim Pedelty

(Editor's Note; Carroll Mayor Jim Pedelty delivered the following condition-of-the-city speech to the Carroll City Council Monday night.)

The month of January was named for the ancient Roman god Janus who had two faces; one looking forward and one backwards. It has traditionally been a time to review what happened in the year just past. It is also a time to look to the future and make plans for the coming year and beyond.

Carroll is an incredible community and it takes the efforts of many people to keep it that way. This review of 2008 will look at our city's accomplishments in essentially chronological order.

Carroll voters overwhelmingly rejected a call for municipalization of our natural-gas utility. Later the city negotiated a franchise extension with Alliant Energy which resulted in a \$25,000 contribution to the city. These funds were allocated to our aquatic center.

John and Rose Guinan purchased the former Wittrock Motors building as a home for the Santa Maria Winery. Extensive remodeling is under way to turn the facility into a major attraction.

The new Wal-Mart Supercenter opened in March.

The City Council awarded the contract for construction of the Carroll Family Aquatic Center to Christensen Construction of Pender, Neb. Despite heavy rains in the spring and summer, significant progress was made during the year.

The Kuemper Ball raised over \$427,000.

The Carrollton Inn's new indoor pool opened, replacing one that had been destroyed when the roof collapsed during a snow storm.

St. Anthony Regional Hospital dedicated its \$25 million surgery center addition on June 1.

Badding Construction bought the former Wal-Mart property for development. The first tenant moved in at year's end.

Relay for Life raised nearly \$250,000, once again making it one of the most successful campaigns in the nation

on a per-capita basis.

At the request of property owners, the city annexed approximately 10 acres west of the Wal-Mart Supercenter which is planned for a shopping mall.

City Council acted to protect agriculture and prevent urban sprawl by passing an ordinance creating an Agriculture Preservation Zoning overlay.

Parks, Recreation and Culture Board was created replacing the Rec Center Advisory Board and the Golf Course Advisory Board.

The art room at the Rec Center was converted to an aerobics room with spinning bicycles and other accessories.

City Council amended and restated the Central Business District Urban Renewal Plan to allow for the continuation of the Corridor of Commerce. Confluence, formerly Brian Clark and Associates, was awarded the contract to perform design work on Adams and Carroll Streets.

McDonald's opened a new restaurant at the former Beardmore Chevrolet location.

Aquatic Center parking lot construction contract was awarded by the City Council. Work will begin in the spring of 2009.

In cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, the city reconfigured Fifth Street parking to add over 20 parking spaces in the central business district.

Carroll County State Bank unveiled plans for its new bank building and named Badding Construction company as general contractor.

Sunnybrook Assisted Living opened a new facility in Carroll.

After years of planning, fund raising, and construction Carroll's Veterans Park monument was dedicated on Veteran's Day. Thanks to Mike Bruning and everyone connected with this project. It is truly inspiring to view, day or night.

Construction began on a new facility for the Carroll Dental Clinic.

The former GE building was sold to area investors.

After a successful \$1 million capital campaign, St. Anthony Regional Hospital opened its staff education center addition which will be operated in conjunction with the DMACC nursing education program.

New Hope Village successfully completed a \$1.6 million capital campaign and earned a \$250,000 bonus grant. Renovation of one cottage was completed by year's end.

Construction began on a new Days Inn motel.

Swan House Assisted Living Center completed a major addition to its Carroll facility.

Carroll Building Department issued building permits representing nearly \$23 million in construction projects during 2008.

Considering the state of our national economy, this list is nearly unbelievable. We can all take great pride in the progress our city made this past year. We have momentum and will do whatever is necessary to keep us moving forward in the future.

That was 2008. What lies ahead in 2009 and beyond?

The financial crises our federal and state governments are facing and the nationwide economic recession will mean slowing the rate of progress for the near future. Your mayor and City Council firmly believe in fiscal responsibility and will be carefully monitoring the economic news as financial decisions are made. However, we cannot simply sit back and do nothing until the economy recovers.

The City Council adopted the following action plan in 2008. Each project listed will be accomplished in stages spread over a number of years.

- Continue the Corridor of Commerce on a planned basis
- Evaluate our sanitary sewer system and plan for needed improvements.
- Expand our water supply to meet present and future needs.
- Improve our emergency notification systems.
- Install traffic lights at the intersection of Griffith Road and Highway 30.

This action plan, which can be found on the city's Web site ([www.cityofcarroll.com](http://www.cityofcarroll.com)) will be the primary focus for city activity near term.

In addition to the action plan, our Airport Commission has plans for terminal improvements and another taxiway on the drawing board. The Library Board of Trustees is in the process of hiring an architect to develop a concept plan for a new library building. Our Comprehensive Plan is now 10 years old and should be updated.

It is no coincidence that four of the five items on the Council's action plan relate to infrastructure. I believe that many of our greatest challenges now and well into the future will involve our infrastructure. Whether we talk about city streets, drinking water treatment and distribution, or waste water collection and treatment, these needs will be the focus of great attention and will place serious demands on our financial resources.

I have been a crusader for increased state gas taxes to provide additional funds for our Road Use Tax Fund. The gas tax is the only way I know of to collect any money from non-residents to pay for the wear and tear on our roads and streets. We have about 60 miles of paved streets in Carroll. On average we should resurface or rebuild 1½ to two miles each year. Not only have we been unable to come close to that level, but our Road Use Tax Fund balance utilized for street improvements is depleting at an alarming rate.

Under current state funding levels it is anticipated that within a few years there will be no monies available in the fund for resurfacing. The current city budget includes a property-tax levy of just over \$100,000 to support the Road Use Tax Fund. I urge you all to write to or call Governor Culver and tell him we must raise the gas tax soon.

Obtaining an adequate water supply has challenged this city for a number of years. We have a new well coming on line soon but will need to find another reliable water field and build a transport system to our treatment facility. Work on this project will be a focus for the foreseeable future.

Drinking water and waste water treatment needs are dictated to us by the EPA by way of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and amount to unfunded mandates. Each time new pollutants are identified nationally, we will have to modify our facilities to conform to the new standards. As of June 30, 2008, 48 percent of our total city debt was a direct result of these demands. We have no control over what or when these changes will be and get inadequate financial assistance to implement them.

Drinking water, waste water, and storm water distribution systems are underground. Thus we only think about them when a malfunction occurs. Unfortunately these systems are aging and will need significant upgrades in the near future. First, however, we must inventory and assess what we have, which is an incredibly expensive and time-consuming process. Without knowing what we have it would be impossible to create an efficient plan to upgrade these systems. At this point, the situation is a huge unfunded liability.

While the challenges just mentioned may seem monumental, they rank some distance behind our number one obstacle now and in the future: population growth. We have seen substantial growth in property values and business activity, but our population has been largely stagnant for 25 years. In addition, we are getting older with the number of retirees growing each month. Despite bringing employees from 40 miles or more each day, employers now have literally hundreds of unfilled jobs.

This problem is not limited to the City of Carroll, but extends to much of the Midwest as well. We need workers to replace those retiring and more families to patronize the businesses we currently have and will have in the future.

Many of the employment opportunities are entry level, but workers at all skill and education levels are needed.

Greater minds than mine are grappling with this dilemma as no one has yet come up with a solution; however, two things are obvious to me. When young families make decisions as to where to live, affordable housing and daycare are major factors. We have great schools, quality health care, a low crime rate, a strong diversified economy, and growing recreational opportunities which make Carroll a great place to live; but housing and daycare must be accorded top priority as we move forward.

The challenges facing us are great, but there is absolutely no doubt in my mind Carroll will deal with each one successfully. Our past successes prove there is nothing we cannot accomplish when we work together.

## Related Links

---

Content © 2009 Daily Times Herald  
Software © 1998-2009 **1up! Software**, All Rights Reserved