STATE OF THE CITY MESSAGE



May 10, 2004

THE HONORABLE STEPHEN R. SPEED
MAYOR

INTRODUCTION

As we look at the City of Dover today, in order to appreciate where we are now it is important to look at the past. It is also extremely important to look at what the future holds for the capital city of Delaware.

During the past ten years, we have gone through the greatest economic growth period this city has ever seen. Population changed from approximately 30,377 to over 33,000--a 9% increase. Our tax base increased from $5 million to $7.1 million. Business licenses nearly doubled--from 2,600 annually to 4,700 annually--with total new construction of about $600 million over the last 10 years. These changes will only accelerate in the future.

That growth created a tremendous demand on our infrastructure. Every department in the City has continued to expand its operations. That expansion has allowed us to enhance our ability to better serve our customer base and the citizens of the City. Productivity improvements have enabled us to provide better services today with about 15% fewer employees than we had a decade ago.

We have expanded our utilities, improved the reliability of our electric system, and kept our salaries and benefits competitive for our employees. During the past years, working together in partnerships with our federal government, congressional leaders and staff, state government, the Governor and her cabinet, the General Assembly, Kent County Levy Court and leaders of our community, we have been able to achieve the following results:

Addressed infrastructure needs at Dover Air Force Base, $95 million.
Kept Playtex in Dover, 1,105 jobs.
Kept Kent County government in the City; a new $18 million facility under construction.
Worked on the sale of the Water Street Parking Lot, $785,000.
Worked for new job opportunities at Garrison Oak; $2.5 million received from the State of Delaware.
Supported Wilmington College's facility in Dover; the first building of a new center costing $2.9 million was recently completed.
Worked with Dover Downs on their expansion which resulted in a $60 million new hotel and convention center.
Worked to support purchase of the Delaware Air Park, which represents a major partnership between the Dover Air Force Base Civil Air Terminal and Delaware State University.
Worked to bring Home Depot to Dover; a new 97,000-square foot store was recently completed.

The future will bring even greater growth and prosperity to Dover.

CITY MANAGER

During the past year, we continued the "Managing to the Budget" theme that had been established in prior years. In addition we began to implement our "Road to Results" Strategic Organization Plan. These combined efforts are improving operations and financial management throughout the organization, including completion rates of capital improvement projects.

A major program completed this year involved creating a "Pay for Performance" for non-bargaining employees that links employee performance with salary increases. The program puts a strong emphasis on attaining results that are aligned with the Strategic Organization Plan.

Another major effort accomplished was the Electric Rate Study. The purpose of this study is to provide Council and staff with information to allow the development of a long-range plan and financial strategy to meet the needs of the City of Dover Electric customers. There are three components of the rate study. The "Cost of Service" study will determine the actual cost to provide service to each class of customer. The "Revenue Requirements" looked at revenue required for the operation of the electric system going forward for the next five years. The "Rate Design" allocated cost to each class of customers based on the cost to serve that class of customers. The Study was completed by a staff committee which was formed to test and validate the recommendations, and make final recommendations for implementation including a schedule. This month members of that committee will start meeting with our customers to discuss their findings.

FINANCE

The Finance Department continues to provide accountability to the citizens of Dover with the management and oversight of our internal controls. The City has continued to receive the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Award for Excellence in Financial Reports and unqualified audit opinions from our external auditors.

Three major accomplishments this past fiscal year were refinancing our General Obligation and Water/Sewer Revenue Bonds (saving the City over $600,000 in future

interest cost), received an upgrade on our Water/Sewer Bond rating, and completed the implementation of the new financial reporting model (GASB 34) with our Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2003.

The Finance Department will continue its efforts to update and improve upon our procedures and systems. Our greatest challenge will be to provide assurance to our citizens that we maintain our financial stability by not only dealing with the issues we face today, but also looking to our future and addressing upcoming financial concerns through proactive measures.

POLICE

The Dover Police Department experienced a challenging year in 2003 as the City continued to grow and the number of total complaints continued to rise. The department handled over 30,500 total complaints, which is a 5% increase over last year's number and a new all-time high for the second year in a row. Unfortunately, violent crimes were up by 22% but the department's clearance rate for Violent Crime is very good at 71%. I am once again pleased to say that the Dover Police Department experienced outstanding clearance rates for Robberies and Burglaries, which have historically been used as benchmarks to judge the performance of the Criminal Investigation Unit. The department cleared 59% of the reported robberies and 46% of the reported burglaries. These numbers will be, once again, much greater than the national averages when those numbers are released later this year.

The Dover Police Department continues to be very aggressive towards illegal drug use and sales. In 2003 the department experienced an 82% increase in pro-active drug arrests by the Drugs, Vice and Organized Crime Unit. Drug investigation and enforcement will continue to be a priority in 2004 as we know that many crimes are directly and indirectly related to illegal drug use and sales. The department will also continue its involvement in the Kent County DEA Task Force.

In 2002 the department was awarded a COPS Grant to hire four additional officers. I am pleased to say that the four additional officers were hired and attended the police academy in 2003, and the department's authorized and current number of

sworn police officers is now at 85. These four additional officers are a much needed addition to the department as the City continues to grow.

The Dover Police Department has continued with its community-based programs and will continue them in the future. These programs include: the Weed and Seed program, the "Are you Okay?" program, the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program, D.A.R.E., the Citizens Police Academy, the Youth Academy, and the Governor's Safe Streets Task Force. Additionally, the department has dedicated a police officer to the Operation Safe Neighborhood Task Force, which includes officers from several departments and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. The task force is run out of the United States Department of Justice, District of Delaware and is intended to help all of the departments in the State of Delaware to conduct more thorough firearms investigations in an effort to take more guns off of the streets and to put more weapons violators behind bars.

The Dover Police Department will continue to meet the needs of the citizens of Dover, and the department's staff will continue to develop strategies to meet the many new challenges in the future.

PLANNING AND INSPECTIONS

The Planning and Inspections Department has a staff dedicated to the continued improvement of the quality of life in the City of Dover. They ensure new proposals meet the standards appropriate for our City and that those standards are maintained before , during and after construction.

Many of the major projects mentioned in the 2002 summary are now coming to completion. Some of those notable projects from 2003 are:

The first building on the Campus for Wilmington College;
The 97,000 square foot Home Depot was completed;
The 81,000 square foot addition for Bayhealth is well on its way;
The 77,000 square foot new Kent County Administration Building is enclosed; and
The 72,000 square foot Duncan office building at 500 West Loockerman Street is nearing completion.

In addition, the department completed the Comprehensive Plan. This was one of the most ambitious undertakings in recent years. The final document approved by the Planning Commission and Council in September 2003 and by the State of Delaware in October was a thoughtful, quality assessment of our current circumstances and inspired

directive for our future. It allowed the City to once again offer the potential for annexation into the City of Dover. It has provided guidance for investment and for project development as proposals are brought. It has also allowed progress on one of the most potentially important initiatives we have to consider--the development of the Eden Hill Farm parcel.

ELECTRIC

We are continuing the program of rebuilding electric systems in areas were there have been outages due to tree problems. This involves replacing overhead lines with underground lines or upgrading and improving overhead lines where placing them underground is not practical. The rebuild of the distribution system in Towne Point is nearly complete. Whenever possible overhead electric feeders are being replaced with underground feeds in order to further reduce outages. Main feeders on Acorn Lane and Walker Road are being replaced with underground lines.

Where overhead lines still run through trees, we have an ongoing program of extensive tree trimming and right-of-way clearance. This program is accomplished by the use of outside contractors. By maintaining the proper clearance between our lines and any trees or underbrush, we reduce the risk of contact between our lines and any tree limbs or bushes that could result in power outages. This will also make it more difficult for squirrels or any other animals to gain access to our lines, removing an additional cause of outages.

As the construction of new homes and business continues, the crews must build more and more distribution lines and service drops in order to supply the ever increasing demand for electric service.

In order to keep up with the changes in the construction and maintenance of electric facilities we are taking advantage of training opportunities for our employees. These opportunities include in-house training, courses, manufacturer demonstrations of new equipment and opportunities to meet with other people who work in the electric utility business. For the first time in 2003, our linemen competed in the American Public Power Association national competition for line workers. Competing against linemen from all across the United States allowed our employees to learn new skills and

techniques and find out about new equipment and methods for line work. It also allowed them to make contacts in other utilities.

The program to upgrade all electric meters to radio-read meters continued this year with a total of 2,016 meters being replaced with the radio-read meters. These meters will provide for accurate measurements, elimination of reading errors, greatly reduced access problems and improved safety for the meter readers. As the number of radio-read meters increase, we will eventually be able to go to either pole-mounted automatic collectors or a mobile unit that would enable one person to read all the meters in one or two days.

Safety presentations were done at Towne Point Elementary, W. B. Simpson Elementary, a home school group and the Dover Public Library.

The ongoing construction of power lines underground has greatly reduced outages due to the replacement of older distribution lines throughout Dover. Underground construction of power lines eliminates outages due to storms and animals.

The 4kV to 12kV conversion planning and design is nearly complete. The Engineering department, with help from the line crews, has been reviewing customer owned equipment and ordering associated equipment to allow the changeover from 4kV to 12kV. Engineering has also been working with Central Services during this process to help reduce inventory at the City warehouse.

The System Operators have completed all phases of the required training program that was developed by the Engineering department. This coming year the System Operators will participate in the PJM training for operators. Upon successful completion of this program, they will be certified as qualified PJM System Operators.

The Mayfair Substation conversion is underway, and the equipment has been ordered. The Division Street Substation conversion is also underway, and the equipment was ordered for the completion of this work.

The new 230kV substation is under construction and the connection to the Conectiv 230kV lines will be accomplished in the near future. Two new 69kV lines from the new station to the 69kV loop are also under construction.

The conversion of the overhead lines to underground lines on Walker Road from Saulsbury Road to Dover Kenton Road has been completed.

In conjunction with major construction at Delaware State University, the major electrical circuits that run in front of the University on Rt. 13 will be placed underground.

On March 11, 2004, Duke celebrated the anniversary of its 8th successful year managing the operations and maintenance of all Dover generating units and the delivery of energy to the City. While fuel costs have soared, Duke has maintained its objective to supply energy to the City of Dover and to keep all units running efficiently whenever needed.

Duke Energy continues to operate the City's generating stations with safety as a top priority. As of this writing, the Duke team in Dover has completed 670 consecutive days accident free and has had only one reportable accident in the last 6 years. This illustrates the commitment that Duke Energy places on protecting its employees and the community as a whole. On June 11, 2004, Duke will be celebrating two full years accident free.

This past year, the McKee Station Unit 3 saw the installation of a new overfire air system to reduce nitrous oxide emissions. This was a major undertaking. The system was required to comply with new and tougher emission limits. The project was managed using Duke station personnel, and the final outcome was a project completed on-time and under budget. Initial testing of the system indicates we are achieving the emission reductions we expected.

Duke has continued its investments in the City's generating assets during this past year. Aging and failed laboratory equipment was replaced with some new, more accurate instruments. Numerous data recorders, valves and plant equipment that were at end of life were also replaced. In addition, the plant security system was upgraded including video cameras and front gate operator. All of these investments are made to improve the safety, reliability and availability of the station.

Last but not least, Duke is extremely proud of the individual and corporate contributions made to the community. For the fifth year in a row, Duke completed the United Way fundraising season with 100% employee participation, raising more than $30,000. In addition, Duke was recognized by the United Way of Dover as having the highest per capita contribution of anyone in the area. These awards are proudly displayed in the front lobby of the station.

The coming year will include many projects and activities that will continue to improve our operation and challenge our employees. Our plans include the following:

Working Safely - First and foremost is to continue to operate safely. We look forward to one day celebrating the impressive feat of passing the current 1,428 day accident-free record.

Manage Market Conditions – The coming year promises to be challenging as changes in the energy market will require the Duke Energy team to remain focused on working through those changes and bringing value to its partnership with the City of Dover.

City of Dover Energy Needs – With the "smart" growth in the City of Dover and the surrounding area comes growth in the energy needs. Duke will be making sure there is enough energy to supply that growth and will continue to support the infrastructure of the City's electric department, providing engineering and project management services as requested. In addition, Duke will be assisting Dover in negotiating a new interconnection agreement to accompany the completion of its 230kV tie to Delmarva Power and Light. This new agreement will bring the City's contracts up to current industry standards and help minimize costs.

Major Turbine Outage – Duke will have a major inspection on the gas turbine at VanSant, the first ever for this machine. This will entail coordinating the purchase of many parts, the efforts of many people and a significant investment in the station.

Duke Energy is excited about extending the relationship between Duke and the City beyond June 30, 2006. The mutual benefits of this relationship to date speak volumes of the value the relationship brings and should make extending the contract an easy task to accomplish.

Environmental Compliance – We remain committed to being good stewards of the environment. To that end, we will have challenges in the coming year complying with the more stringent nitrogen oxide standards which became effective in May 2003. We are committed to complying with the regulations through the most reasonable approach possible.

Community Involvement – The Duke team in Dover will continue to focus on community involvement through its relationship with the United Way and other organizations in Dover throughout the year. You have every right to expect that Duke Energy will lead Dover and Delaware in this area.

PUBLIC WORKS

Over the past year, the Department of Public Works has overseen the completion of street related paving and concrete rehabilitation improvements totaling more than $1 million. These improvements include 17 City streets, four of which are located in the Downtown Revitalization Project Area. In addition, the engineering staff completed the Street & Alley Survey so transportation improvements can be prioritized using accurate field information. Construction of the Dover Little League parking lot is now complete in anticipation of the upcoming season. Five subdivisions have received legislator-sponsored entrance signs, and three more subdivisions will receive similar improvements over the next few months. Staff also completed work on the Downtown Dover Parking Study that was commissioned last fall. In September 2003, the Department of Public Works received a NPDES Storm water Phase II permit which authorizes the City to discharge storm water from all portions of the City's storm water system. This permit covers a five-year period in which the City must implement all of the obligations outlined in the permit.

Progress has also been made in upgrading the City's sanitary sewer system. The Turnberry Pump Station Upgrade and the Walker Road Sanitary Sewer Diversion Project will be completed this fiscal year. The Walker Road Pump Station Upgrade is now underway and is scheduled for completion in late summer. Staff is also working with consulting engineers to complete the design of the Puncheon Run Motor Control & Pump Replacement Project and the Garrison Oak Pump Station. Progress has also been made on the U.S. 13 Interceptor Project. In February, City staff submitted a proposal for the privatization of the wastewater system on Dover Air Force Base, and staff is awaiting the review of the proposal by the United States Air Force.

The Department of Public Works has also made significant progress in the areas of water distribution and water supply. The Cooper Road Water Main Extension Project was completed last summer. Construction of the West Dover Water Loop is underway. This project will extend water service along Route 8 to Artis Drive once it is complete. The City has entered into an interconnection agreement with Tidewater Utilities to supply fire protection to Tidewater's Lakeland Service Area located on South State Street. This agreement reaffirms our relationship with Tidewater Utilities. The Water System SCADA Upgrade and the Meter Reading Technology Upgrade Projects were completed. In addition, the Wellhead Redevelopment Program has improved the production capacities at Well #2 and Well #8 with improvements to Well #11 to be completed by the end of the budget year. Whitman, Requardt & Associates has begun work on the Water System Master Plan Update. This plan will be used to define the future of the water system for the next 20 years.

In March, the Department of Public Works laid out a 10-point plan to address the persistent brown water complaints, and staff is diligently working to resolve this issue. An RFQ has been issued for consulting engineer assistance, and the 10-point plan has been converted into a 90-day Plan of Action. As staff progresses through the plan, additional informational updates will be provided to the public.

Over the past year, the Department of Public Works has completed a number of water system improvements including the addition of both chlorine and fluoride to the

City's water supply system. Various distribution system improvements have been completed or are under construction including the Fox Hall Drive Water Main Extension, the Weston Drive Water Main Upgrade, the Wild Meadows Water Main Upgrade, the Cooper Road Water Main Extension and the U.S. Route 13 Water Main Extension at the north end of the City. Additional improvements to the City's water system include a Water System SCADA Upgrade, Meter Reading Technology Upgrades, and maintenance on our six elevated storage tanks. The Engineering Division is planning several major transmission improvements including the Division Street Water Main Upgrade and the West Dover Water Loop.

Approximately $1.5 million in street related work will be completed in the current fiscal year. These improvements include street paving, parking lot rehabilitations at City Hall and Bradford Street, the Downtown Dover Pedestrian Amenities & Landscape Project and various other street and alley infrastructure improvements. In addition, the City will begin construction on the Downtown Dover Revitalization Project which includes various infrastructure improvements in a 20-block area located between Mary Street and Loockerman Street and Governors Avenue and the railroad tracks.

The Department of Public Works is also making significant progress in improving and upgrading the City's sanitary sewer system. These improvements include, but are not limited to, the following projects: Puncheon Run Motor Control and Pump Upgrades, Turnberry Pump Station Reconstruction, U.S. 13 East Interceptor Project, Garrison Oak Pump Station Design and Walker Road Pump Station Upgrade Design.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Information Technology Department (I/T) primarily services internal customers (City employees) by providing them a robust platform of technologies. Many internal upgrades and developments have helped other departments keep the internal wheels of our local government turning efficiently.

To the community, our visible accomplishment is the City's presence on the Internet. We started the New Year with our new website on December 31, 2002. With an inviting look and feel as well as an ever increasing amount of useful information, the activity level jumped quickly and continued to increase dramatically throughout the year. The number of visitors tripled to nearly 40,000 per month. The amount of data transferred by the public steadily increased from .7 gigabytes in December 2002 to more than 13 gigabytes in December 2003. That is an increase of more than 1800%. Some of the new features include:

A community calendar which not only provides information on City activities, but also provides a free resource for local non-profit agencies to publish their events.
Printable applications for employment and city services like building permits.
Agendas, minutes, and paperless packets for public meetings.
Photo galleries, visitor center, and many local links.
On-line purchasing/bid posting.
New Public Library site.
A search option on the home page that puts everything we have at your fingertips.
A feedback form for you to send us your message 24/7.

Our new site was recognized by MuniNet Guide as one of the top ten city sites for 2003.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The City of Dover budget was submitted to the GFOA in October 2003. The size of the budget document was reduced by five percent over last year in an effort to reduce printing costs. The City was awarded its 15th Distinguished Budget Presentation Award.

A customer service survey was included with the monthly utility bills in April 2004. We plan to use the results of the survey to pinpoint anything that could potentially be a problem and make improvements or changes as needed.

We included a Preauthorized Payment application with monthly bills in August 2003 and February 2004 as part of our effort to become more efficient at processing payments by promoting bank drafting and mailing of payments. As a result of the number of customers switching, bank drafting has increased by nearly 33 percent over last fiscal year's average. We also began including return envelopes with customers' bills beginning in July 2003. As a result, payments received by mail have increased 7.5 percent over the same period last fiscal year.

On October 31, 2003, we placed Customer Comment Cards on display at the Customer Service counters, and in February 2004, we also began passing the cards out to customers who came in for assistance. We continue to receive valuable information from our customers via these cards. Responses have been mostly positive--of the 95 comment cards we have received so far, 92 were positive and only three were negative--and each comment was addressed and/or the problem was corrected the same day.

The City's *Customer Quarterly* was reformatted to include the City's vision, a Frequently Asked Questions section, a calendar of local events, and other information of use to our customers.

The Dover Police will conduct one training session for Administrative Services staff on what to do in the event of a robbery or hostile situation. This training will help our employees to be more observant, to remain calm, and could help save lives in the event of a robbery.

In July 2004, we plan to purchase a Remittance Processing System for the Cashier area. Currently, the City processes an average of 700 checks per day. The number of payments has increased about 20 percent over the last three years. It has reached the point of needing to add either staff or automation. This new system would avoid the need for hiring a part-time staff person and would save five cents ($.05) per check in bank processing fees. This is a savings of approximately $700.00 per month. It would also provide the City with an imaging system for our stubs and check payments. Currently, stubs are stored in record boxes and are difficult and time consuming to retrieve when discrepancies occur. Additional features of the system include a check audit trail, check endorsement, check encoding, and one-pass functionality--transactions are imaged, scan lines read, MICR read, endorsed, encoded, sorted, and balanced after one-pass on a remittance processor.

TAX ASSESSOR

The City continues to grow with a year-to-year assessment increase of $11 million dollars for last July's billing. To date since last July, we have added an additional $29 million dollars in assessment to our tax base. This is due to new construction. Collections are up to date with no taxes over two years old being owed.

The Department is continuing to computerize it's office by the inclusion of electronic building sketching, computerization of all miscellaneous deeds and correspondence in the property record files, the purchase of a computerized mass appraisal software that would improve the assessment process, and incorporating and applying Kent County's new mapping system.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The Delaware Prevention Network continued its education efforts with youth. This year we are working in partnership with the Delaware Parent Association. We are offering the Creating Strong Families program for our youth and their families.

The Weed & Seed initiative continues its strategy to provide a better quality of life to residents in the designated area. Utilizing a grant from the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, the coordinator actively provides neighborhood restoration, intervention, and prevention assistance. This year, partnering with the Police Athletic League, youth from 8 to 17 were offered various programs such as a basketball tournament with Dover and Wilmington teams participating, a new basketball league and a chess workshop. A tree planting project and sidewalk enhancements were also completed with funding from this grant. Look for more exceptional quality of life programs from Weed & Seed.

The Parks, Recreation & Library department continues to expand, improve, and provide athletic leagues, recreational opportunities, cultural activities, and educational information to the citizens of Dover and the greater Dover area.

Working with the Kent County Tourism Corporation (KCTC), we were able to host the 17th Annual Amish Bike tour with more than 1,000 riders. Olde Dover Days, another popular event attended by tourists and locals alike, was also co-sponsored between the department and KCTC. Olde Dover Days brings history to life with re-enactments, Maypole dances, a parade, and much more in the capitol city.

Staff continues to play a major role in the First Night® Dover celebration. The department handles all logistics for the major non-alcoholic family-oriented event throughout downtown Dover.

March's annual Youth-In-Government Day was held with 46 high school seniors participating. This year's participants were from Dover High, Caesar Rodney, Campus Community, and St. Thomas More High Schools. The mock City Council meeting is always the highlight of the day.

We are excited about this year's 28th Annual Spring Summer Concert Series. The 18 week series held on Thursday nights is always a big hit with citizens of all ages. Starting in May (and with weather permitting), it is held on The Green. In 2003, 4,137 patrons visited the series. We feel the rainy weather kept people away; however, this season promises to be better with a back-up inside site available.

For the cost of $1, we leased the Col. John Haslet Armory from the State of Delaware. This turned into a fabulous opportunity to offer youth and adults indoor recreation activities unlike nothing we've offered before. Our staff was able to offer programming for 1,684 patrons in the month of February 2004 alone! Again, just looking at the month of February, we had 32 hours to offer programming--we successfully filled 29 of them. This outstanding effort is just a taste of what our department can do to enhance the quality of life for Dover and its citizens.

The new playground structures at Silver Lake Park and Division/Kirkwood Streets Park have proven to be a big success. This wonderful play equipment offers youth a safe and fun place to play. Frequently, happy smiling faces cover these areas. A special thank you goes to the Dennis and Hardcastle families for their land contribution making the Division/Kirkwood Street playground project possible.

The Silver Lake Commission continues work to improve the water quality of Silver Lake. DNREC and the Commission will continue working together and offering support for projects. The permitting process is still an area the Commission would like to revise.

Youth and adult sports continue to be successful. The men's spring/summer softball league grew to 26 teams this year. The co-ed league enlisted eight teams for this season. Both are increased from last year. Thirteen teams made up the Kent County Church League. Our summer field hockey leagues were again successful with 12 high school teams and 10 adult teams participating.

Basketball drew 172 youth between our summer and winter programming. The Super Summer Playground served 43 children. Working with the United States Tennis Association (USTA), we offered 142 youth and adults tennis lessons. Arts and Crafts, Introduction to Cheerleading, HABIT, and Bus Trips all continue to offer our citizens an enhanced quality of life, along with the Cub & Girl Scouts programming which continue to grow and encourage today's youth to become better adults for the future.

The Greater Dover Arts Council (GDAC) continues its work advocating and supporting the arts in Dover. Parks and Recreation staff solicited and assembled data for the tri-annual arts calendar covering the Greater Dover area. This year formatting a database of information on artists and related groups/organizations has been a goal and is well underway with the help of GDAC and the Delaware Division of Arts.

Working with Kent County and the State of Delaware, staff is continuing the creation of the Capital Bikebelt. The bike/walking/jogging path along Schutte Park is used daily by many park patrons. The next phase will take this path even farther.

The Dover Public Library has continued to provide excellent service to the residents of its service area during the past year. A total of 188,378 people visited the library last year. The library was open 3,464 hours during the year. A total of 327,310 books and other materials have been loaned to library patrons during this period. Since the introduction of the Kentnet automation system in 1994, the library has registered 43,185 borrowers. The library continued loaning books and videos to senior centers throughout Dover.

The library collection contains 93,340 items including books, videos, DVDs, recorded books, and musical cassettes and compact discs. Library staff answered 17,783 reference questions in the last year. Under contract with the Delaware Division of Libraries, the library provides telephone and e-mail reference services to all Kent

County residents. This year library staff began answering reference questions via online chat through AnswerOnline. The library worked with the Delaware Academy of Medicine to hire a Kent County Consumer Health Circuit Librarian to provide outreach services to patrons relating to consumer health questions and concerns.

The library has continued to offer programs to people of all ages. Fifty-six adult programs were presented with 1,016 people attending these programs.

Adult programs included the "In Harmony" musical series in collaboration with Wesley College; also, library staff continued offering book discussions to the public in cooperation with the Biggs Museum. Library staff began an Adopt-a-Shelf program, matching volunteers with shelf reading duties throughout the library. Staff also began a Brown Bag lunch book discussion group. Adults and teenagers participated in a winter reading program last year.

The Children's Services Department presented 278 programs during the year for children ages twelve and under, with a total attendance of 13,912. Staff continued offering after-school programs to homeschoolers, story times for toddlers and preschoolers, special celebrations during National Library Week and Children's Book Week, and instruction on using the Internet. Library staff offered both a summer reading program and a winter reading program for children last year.

The Friends of the Dover Public Library continued to financially support the library. The Friends purchased books for discussions, including those in cooperation with the Biggs Museum and the Brown Bag book discussion series. They also paid for performers during the children's summer reading program, character costumes, craft materials, and more.

ROBBINS HOSE COMPANY #1

The Robbins Hose Company, Dover's Volunteer Fire Department, has served City residents with fire and rescue services for over 121 years and is the only all-volunteer fire department in the nation to serve a state capitol.

Under the leadership of Chief Brian F. Bashista, the Department responded to 1,046 calls for service last year and trained firefighters over 3,500 hours.

The Fire Department maintains and staffs five engines, two ladder trucks and one heavy rescue truck. This year the Department placed in service two new fire engines that replaced 25- and 17-year old engines. This replacement of apparatus will substantially increase firefighter safety because all firefighters will now ride inside of the apparatus rather than in open cabs.

The prevention of fires and safety of our children is a top priority of the Department. Last year over 2,500 children were taught the importance of firefighter safety and over 500 smoke detectors were distributed to City residents.

The Fire Department placed in service 50 new self contained breathing apparatuses in December at a total cost of $110,000. These breathing apparatuses replace air packs which are antiquated for today's use. The new air packs will include the latest technology in air pack design and will increase the safety of our firefighters. Our department is the first in the State of Delaware to upgrade its breathing apparatus for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards. This equipment ensures our readiness for any incident which may face us.

The firefighters of the City of Dover are committed to providing first-rate service to the citizens of Dover. Their dedication is shown through hundreds of hours spent by members during training and while responding to everyday calls for assistance.

CONCLUSION

As we look toward the future of our city, I believe we must protect the jobs we already have and seek new job opportunities. There is no question that no matter how much growth we undertake, our focal point must continue to be the preservation of our quality of life. The completion of SR1 and the future sale of Eden Hill Farms truly represent an exciting opportunity for this city and Kent County to continue to grow. We should be extremely excited about the most recent joint announcement of Delaware State University and the Delaware Civic Center Corporation—the building of a wellness center, a new football stadium, and the Delaware Civic Center for a total cost of approximately $90 million. Wesley College continues to make significant changes along with Wilmington College, representing a major commitment to this city and to our future.

There was a recent announcement at the Delaware Air Park regarding a $16 million project which will include significant land acquisition, new airplane hangars and expansion of the current runway from 3,700 feet to 4,200 feet. This is significant to the future of aviation needs and concerns to the City, Kent County and the State of Delaware.

Tourism in this state is extremely important, representing $1.6 billion to our state economy as well as 22,000 jobs. This plays a very important role in our present and future economy. Planned expansions by the Mills Corporation at the Dover Mall and by Dover Downs will continue to bring travelers to our beautiful city. The Governor's recent designation of a State Historical Urban Park in Dover will encourage tourism and improve the quality of life in our downtown area.

The old ACME site located next to the Blue Hen Corporate Center has been construction of an $18 million state-of-the-art facility for County administration offices will complete within a year. As you travel to the north, the old Hechinger building is now being occupied by a furniture store. Further north, you will see that a Home Depot has now replaced the former Nichols/Farmer's Market facility. The former Lowe's site in front of Dover Downs has been refurbished and is occupied by Best Buy and Michael's.

As we continue to expand, it is absolutely critical that the leaders of this community build partnerships and strong working relationships with our citizens and our leaders. We need to support and work with the Human Relations Commission and other committees that go a long way in ensuring a strong future for this city.

We still continue to go through strong economic growth, and the demands on our City Council, department management and staff will be very strenuous. I believe we are up for that challenge. The future for the capital city of the State of Delaware is indeed very bright.