

# City of Rock Falls

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Rock Falls, IL 61071-2854

## Mayor

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City Administrator  
Richard J. Downey  
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815-622-1104

## 2010 Rock Falls State of the City

### **2010 has been an exciting and challenging time for the City of Rock Falls!**

With that being said, your elected officials will meet and concur whatever may lie ahead, as they have proven time and time again.

The Citizens of Rock Falls can be proud of the caring and effective way your elected officials, City Administrator, Department Heads and employees show their dedication daily.

The City also has a number of people that share that pride and dedication. Those who give of themselves to make Rock Falls the best it can be by serving on numerous appointed committees and commissions. If you look at our website [www.rockfalls61071.com](http://www.rockfalls61071.com) you will find them listed. The next time you see them, thank them for all they do.

The City will also unveil a citywide newsletter which will keep our customers well-informed as to the inner workings along with updates and progress of the City Departments in 2011.

In 2010, in addition to his regular duties, our City Administrator, Richard Downey was very busy working on numerous grant projects.

2010 was the end of the grant process for one of the two United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) riverfront site clean-up grants. Spring of 2011 will bring a close to the second grant.

The City also was awarded an Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) grant for demolishing the eastern buildings on that site.

The City's Housing Grant Programs continued in 2010. The Single Family Owner Occupied Rehabilitation (SFOOR), Small Rental Property Program (SRPP) and the Mobility and Accessibility Rehabilitation Services (MARS) are working well in helping many people in our community.

The City was awarded an energy grant from Blackhawk Hills RC&D that will replace lights and windows in the community building, as well as, new lighting in City Hall, Police, Fire and Electric Departments, and solar lighting at the Electric Department Garage.

The City of Rock Falls applied for and received over \$3.7 million in total grants for 2010.

### **BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

2010 was one of Rock Falls' milestone years! The City's Code Enforcement Officer and the Mayor had worked over the past four years to implement an Administrative Hearing Officer. In 2010, the cities of Rock Falls and Sterling had worked very hard updating their ordinances, fines and codes in Police, Fire and Building Departments. Working together in choosing the appropriate software and hearing officers was 'key'. This will

be, not only a cost savings, but will expedite the enforcement process much faster. The initial hearing was held on December 21<sup>st</sup> and it went very well.

In 2010 the city was also approached by the Whiteside County Housing Authority to do their annual housing inspections. The proceeds from these inspections will help offset the operational costs of the Building Department.

There were 83 weed and grass violations with only 22 given to Street Department and 14 tax liens filed for nonpayment of invoices for City's property maintenance. Electrical inspections totaled 161 with approximately 80 updates and 62 property transfers.

With the soft economy over the last year, a total of 901 permits were issued with a total construction value over \$4.5million. There were no large projects during 2010. This speaks well for our community where residents are taking pride and investing in their homes and properties in Rock Falls.

## **Police Department**

Rock Falls Police Department has a staff of 19 sworn officers, 8 non-sworn, and 5 school crossing guards for a total of 32 in the department.

The Rock Falls Police Department has obtained full manpower in 2010. The increased manpower will assist the department in reducing the overtime that has increased over the past years. This has proven to cut down substantially on the problems we have had in past years. In 2010 the Rock Falls Police Department has responded to over 17,000 calls, of those 329 were vehicle accidents, 3,471 calls were "E911".

The department continues training its personnel with over 2,600 hours credited in 2010.

The cities of Sterling and Rock Falls are now more comparable in regards to fines, processing of violations and rulings with the implementation of the new Administrative Hearing Officer. This will be a cost savings in regards to the amount of legal expenses previously paid for in long lengthy hearings.

With the assistance of the citizens, organizations, and businesses of Rock Falls and surrounding communities the department will be able to institute the Police K-9 again. A total of \$12,000.00 has been raised in donations for the purchase and training of a Police K-9 and handler. The anticipated date of the arrival of the K-9 is late spring to early summer of 2011.

The department had one retiree, Howard Melchi, well deserved after 30 years of service to the citizens and businesses of Rock Falls and the surrounding area.

With the resignation of one of the crossing guards this year and the assistance of the Rock Falls Elementary School District, the City was able to keep its fifth school crossing guard. The City strives to keep the school children safe and at the same time staying economically responsible. The citizens and businesses of Rock Falls can rest assured that the city is in good hands and they are safe.

## **Fire Department**

During 2010, the Rock Falls Fire Department responded to a total of 991 incidents. A preliminary estimate of property loss due to fire totaled approximately \$750,000.00 to properties, with an estimated value of \$3,800,000.00. Three fires in residential structures accounted for losses of an estimated \$272,500.00, but there were no major losses in commercial structures within our jurisdiction. RFFD provided assistance with two major fires in Sterling and one near Sheffield with the MABAS Division 30 Hazardous Materials Response Team. RFFD also assisted Mt. Carroll as part of the Division 30 Technical Rescue Team during a fatal grain bin accident.

Three firefighters sustained minor injuries during firefighting operations while four citizens were injured as a result of residential structure fires during 2010. All injuries were minor in nature.

The department is currently staffed with 14 full-time and eight Paid-on-Call firefighters. Training hours for personnel amounted to approximately 1,500 hours for the year.

The Commercial Building Inspection Program continues in cooperation with the Building Inspector with approximately 575 inspections having been completed with 332 violations cited.

## **Wastewater Treatment Department**

The construction on the new waste treatment plant is moving forward on schedule. This is the largest project the City has implemented in a number of decades and the plant will begin operations this fall. The new main raw pump station on 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue is completed at a cost of \$2 million.

The department responded to 66 service calls, 27 plant and pump station alarms after hours, cleaned and inspected 10,700 feet of main throughout the city, repaired and replaced a number of manholes, 22 catch basins were replaced and 16 catch basins were repaired. The department performed root control by injection into 2,500 feet of main.

Under new equipment, the TV camera was updated and new software was installed at a cost of \$13,000.00, equipment upgrades were made throughout the department at a cost of \$5,000.00 and a new jetter truck at a cost of approximately \$375,000.00 to be delivered in early 2011.

We also renegotiated an IL Environmental Protection Assoc. (IEPA) \$5.5million loan from 4% to 1.25% and we were able to negotiate over \$1.3 million to be forgiven. This was a good year for Rock Falls!

## **Water Treatment Department**

Superintendent Ted Padilla continues the education programs throughout the city and rural schools. In 2011 there will be a \$1,000.00 scholarship for a Rock Falls High Student through the Groundwater/Electric Committees.

This department also has been busy in the field; whereas, repairing nine service boxes, 12 service leaks, replaced 16 service lines, 15 main breaks and replaced 16 service lines. They also replaced 1,530 ft. of water main and added fire hydrants.

Under new equipment, the purchase of 2010 utility truck for distribution crew and a 2010 full size van for service crew.

## **Street Department**

Under new equipment, the purchase of a new hot patch machine, a new sign machine to replace the old one which was outdated and could no longer get parts for, and updating and refurbishing the total fleet of vehicles.

We have a new computer program to help, not only rate our streets, but keep track of maintenance.

Usage of Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) consisted of 1,280 tons of salt, 2,600 gallons of emulsion for patching machine, 500 ton of CA-16 for patching machine, and 120 ton of cold patch.

Our street program this year was to concentrate on repairs and maintenance. You have probably seen a lot of street work being done. This will continue in 2011.

The Street Department did a lot of work at the Reliant site in 2010 which saved the taxpayers a substantial amount of money.

Please remember the City has over 65 miles of streets to repair and maintain. We are doing the best we can with the limited resources we have to work with. We receive less funding every year. So, please be patient!

## **Electric Department**

2010 has been a very productive year. We have invested a lot of time and effort into improving the reliability of our system.

We replaced more than 175 poles, installed more than 20,000 ft of underground cable replacing 45 year old cable, and also completed cable replacement on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Avenues.

The department installed more than 18,000 ft of conduit dedicated for the primary use of the installation of fiber optics. We, also, ran conduit down Prophetstown Road for future use to Riverdale School. In addition to conduit we installed close to 8,000 ft of fiber optic cable to hook up an additional seven businesses to our fiber optic internet service.

We continue to update and install the automated radio read electric meters on our system. In 2010 we installed more than 1,000 meters. The total project is nearing the end and to date we have more than 85% of the system changed out. We have seen a dramatic improvement in the efficiency of our meters.

We continued our push for the use of energy efficiency means to lower the City's electricity usage. In 2010 we installed 23 new induction lights on Dixon Avenue. Over their lifetime we should see a reduction of electrical use of over 50%.

In October 2010 Acuity Brands helped begin revitalization of the City with sustainable new LED lighting and pole system for energy efficient lighting and control; whereas, announcing its participation in a pilot outdoor LED lighting and revitalization project in the City of Rock Falls. The new decorative lighting, which will use LED technology, in the City Hall Municipal Parking Complex Lot #10 on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue now. The City of Rock Falls' overall objective is to eventually revitalize the entire downtown area. The project will be highlighted by new LED lighting, which will increase energy efficiency, improve overall quality of light and reduce overall maintenance costs. These lights are estimated to save 60% in electrical usage and maintenance costs.

The Electric Department was able to take advantage of federal grant opportunities. The department applied for and received a grant to replace the lighting in its warehouse with energy efficient fluorescent lighting. It is anticipated that this will save the department 20% a year on its energy costs. The department also received a grant to continue its dedication to renewable energy to install a photovoltaic array on its offices. This installation is estimated to save 10% in annual energy usage.

The department received a Broadband Grant of more than \$700,000.00. This money will be used to upgrade our infrastructure and to expand our fiber optic network.

The Electric Department continues its dedication to energy education in the community. In conjunction with the Groundwater Education provided by the Water Superintendent, we are now educating 5<sup>th</sup> graders in and around the Rock Falls area on electrical safety and energy efficiency. This education was well received and we anticipate the continued success of this program.

In addition to the education in Rock Falls, we utilized an intern from NIU to develop and design educational material to inform our customers with the different billing options available to them, as well as, a simple explanation of how to read an electric bill.

2010 was a busy year for storms in and around Rock Falls. In June we had severe weather roll through the area. At its peak in the severe weather we had power out for almost 2,500 of our 5,400 customers. Through the dedication of our employees we were able to restore power in a very timely manner. In November we had a microburst hit the east section of town taking out the power. Through this continued dedication we were able to install two new poles, transfer the underground risers, and repair three other poles within 24 hours.

We have continued to dedicate ourselves to providing the most cost effective and efficient service to our customers. In 2010 Rock Falls received the Platinum Member Award from American Public Power Association (APPA) for reliable power. The APPA is a nationwide association.

2011 is shaping up to be a busy year as well. We have the installation of two new diesel generators at our Buell Road Substation scheduled for completion. In addition, we will be upgrading feeders, completing our AMR installation, and continue putting new services underground.

### **Rock Falls Community Development Corp (RFCDC)**

This past year has proven to be an incredibly busy one for the Rock Falls Community Development Corporation. A primary focus of the RFCDC is to market development opportunities for our community. They

are continuously submitting properties and information for potential projects that are looking to expand, and locate in this region.

While working closely with the City of Rock Falls, they realize that job creation and job retention is at the heart of all endeavors. Making sure that all our businesses are up to speed on any and all available state and federal programs, as well as working with our legislators on behalf of small business has been a priority for the RFCDC and the city. The business of economic development is a hard one to quantify, but any job retained or created is of paramount importance to our citizens and to our local economy. The RFCDC, as well as, the City does a great job of telling our story, and why Rock Falls is the optimum location in which to do business.

The RFCDC and the City continue to work with BioPro Rock Falls on a daily basis, assisting them in moving forward to ground breaking. The economic impact of the jobs created by BioPro Rock Falls will indeed be significant. Increased revenues from both direct and indirect wages will trickle down to create even more employment opportunities, as more dollars are put into our community.

And when mention is made of the RFCDC and the City of Rock Falls, one cannot help but to acknowledge all of the work they have done on the Riverside Bike & Walk District. They have indeed spent many long hours on project development and we are looking forward to the day when the results of those efforts can be made public.

### **Rock Falls Tourism Office**

Rock Falls Tourism office works with many partners and organizations to help create tourism opportunities throughout the community and surrounding area.

They were a very active member of the Steering Committee to put on the LAST TIME DC-3/C47 gathering. The group won the RF Chamber "Shoulder to the Wheel" award for organizations.

They participated in the Recreational Trail Committee, developing a "donor program" for benches, etc., along the trail.

They also worked with the Planning Board for the Whiteside County Barn Tour, along with volunteering at the event and its promotion through our website and social media.

The Rock River Trail Committee finds ways to better promote the attributes of being along the Rock River, and participation on the Steering Committee for the Hennepin Canal to help in efforts to restore the use of the canal to enhance tourism opportunities, assisted members of the Volks Marching Society to facilitate a route and access to materials for their program on a local level.

They worked with the Dixon Reagan Centennial Committee to facilitate activities during the Centennial Year.

Their office created the Reagan Passport and distributed nearly 5,000 for the Reagan Centennial.

Their office joined the Lincoln Highway Coalition to promote the mission of that organization as it relates to the "Lincoln Highway" in Rock Falls/Sterling area. Rock Falls was selected to receive a \$10,000 mural which was dedicated in September. It depicts the "Rock Falls Corn Festival" in the early days of the Lincoln Highway

Their office gave the program "Discover Your Own Backyard"

Rock Falls Tourism Staff and Board of Directors are available to promote tourism opportunities, as well as, working on finding new and interesting opportunities for tourism utilizing the resources available in the community. Their office conducted "Hospitality Seminar" in March at the Rock Falls Hotel. It was attended by 35 individuals.

Rock Falls Tourism works with organizations and events to assist in various ways. The role of the tourism office is a resource to other groups. This may be in the form of funding, information and training if needed.

Their office gave nearly \$8,000.00 in grant funding to other organizations that met the Rock Falls Tourism Mission for sponsorship dollars or reimbursable marketing funds.

Rock Falls Tourism Staff are members and supporters the Rock Falls Chamber of Commerce and the Rock Falls Economic Development Corporation.

### **ROCK FALLS CHAMBER**

In 2010, the Chamber put on a dozen events, the purpose of which was to bring people to Rock Falls and promote commerce and businesses with its members. The Rock Falls Chamber of Commerce promotes City of Rock Falls and its businesses.

2010 was also a historical year with the Chamber approving two seats on the Board of Directors for members of our youth community. It was an unprecedented move by the Board to give our youth a 'say' in what happens in our community with an eye to the future. This shows that the Board continues to be innovative and creative with a view of what might be.

2010 saw the beginning of our Leads Group, a gathering of Chamber members who would share ideas and provide business leads to other members. This is one area in which they intend to grow in 2011.

2010 was also the first time that the Chamber sponsored a Fall City Wide Garage Sale and it turned out to be more popular than their spring sale. It also proved to be a turning point in how they reached Chamber members and our community through social media. Their nearly 900 Facebook friends spread the word about the fall sale immediately. It wasn't overnight or the next day - it was instant! It confirmed the importance of social media as the way the Chamber will all do businesses, not in the future, but now.

The Rock Falls Chamber exists because of its members and their support. They have always felt that if their members are successful, the Chamber will be successful. If the Chamber is successful through creativity and thinking for tomorrow's world, then their members too will be successful.

Outwardly, the Chamber's mission is to provide vision and leadership for business success AND civic well being. Internally, they provide an open and free thinking environment with a philosophy of "know all the questions, not all the answers, look for the different instead of the same, never walk when there is room to run, and never do anything that can't be a game."

The Chamber deeply appreciates the support of its 340+ members and looks forward to a solid partnership in 2011. It is easy to see that there are a lot of people working very hard for you to promote this Great City of Rock Falls.

**Once again I would like to thank the good people who work with me each and every day, and most of all, the people of Rock Falls for the faith and trust you bestow upon me by giving me the great honor to serve as your Mayor!**

Respectfully,



Mayor David H Blanton