

CITY OF HOLTVILLE

State of the City Address 2010
Presented to City – January 29, 2010

Colleen Ludwig, Mayor
David Bradshaw, Mayor Pro-Tem
Bianca Padilla Past Mayor
Jerry Brittsan, Council Member
Richard Layton, Council Member

Introduction of Mayor Colleen Ludwig by Chamber President –

Colleen Ludwig has served in City Government throughout the years, not only as a Council Member but as City Treasurer for seven years. She works as a Health Care Counselor. She is married to Richard Ludwig, a native of Holtville and a Holtville High School graduate. Richard is now retired from the agriculture industry. They have 4 children, all HHS graduates, 8 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren.

Colleen has played a significant role in obtaining property formerly belonging to the Meek family, also known as, the Holtville Motor Inn. She was instrumental in relocating a well known retail business and in the establishment of a new retail business in town. She is dedicated to the goal of improving the business district and pursuing a public safety building.

Colleen takes the podium

Thank you Matt for that warm introduction. I am very happy to be here tonight and “welcome all of you”. Matt has introduced many, hopefully all of, the dignitaries here tonight and I want to thank all of you for coming; especially those of you visiting Holtville – “Welcome”.

Before we get started I want to introduce my fellow Council members who will be helping me present our ‘State of the City Address’ for you this evening. I would like to start by introducing Bianca Padilla. Bianca graduated from Holtville High School in 1996 before attending UCSD where she earned her degree in Linguistics and followed that with a law degree from UC Davis. Bianca is married to Christian Legaspi and the proud mom of Caleb and Ava.

Also serving on Council is Richard Layton. Richard is not only a graduate of Holtville High School, but has worked for the Holtville school district for 24 years and is the Transportation Director. Richard and his wife, Linda, have one son, Travis, and 3 grand children. Richard also serves on the Air Advisory Board. Both Richard and Bianca are starting their 4th year serving on City Council.

David Bradshaw is a busy, busy man. Not only does he serve as the Council Mayor Pro-tem, but as the Holtville Chamber Vice-President, and is a member of several professional organizations. David is the

General Superintendent for the Imperial Irrigation District's Resources, Planning and Management section and works closely with the local growers to conserve that precious resource...water. David and his wife Dee live with their children, Brooke and Evan, in Holtville. David and Dee met at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in the Agriculture Department where they both graduated with B. S. degrees.

Council Member Jerry Brittsan and his wife Jeanne were unable to attend tonight due to a prior commitment, but they asked me to express their good wishes and hope that you have a wonderful time at the Carrot Festival.

This Council is a great team to work with and I appreciate their dedicated service to Holtville.

I would also like to thank the Holtville Chamber of Commerce for bringing us together tonight at the kick off event of the 2010 Carrot Festival. The festival is a tradition in Holtville...for the past 63 years we have started the new-year with a grand festival that attracts thousands of people to Holtville where they enjoy the warm weather, friendly people, good food and our unique charm. Thank you to everyone who keeps the tradition alive and who organizes such a wonderful event.

This year the Chamber's theme is a "Field of Dreams" which is very appropriate as Holtville was founded by a dreamer...Mr. William Holt.

Everyone has dreams, but Mr. Holt's dream was to build a city in the middle of a desert and he did this with a lot of hard work, good planning, and a dogged determination to make it happen. Mr. Holt built Holtville on the banks of the Alamo River and recognized the importance of water in the desert. Today our farmers grow over 80 different crops annually. This truly is a field of dreams.

Our farming heritage is important to Holtville and just like those farmers who founded this amazing town, we will collectively continue to plant seeds for the future, we will invest here, grow here and raise our families here with the same pioneer spirit.

Each new year we take time to reflect – both on where we've been and where we are going. Now, more than ever, it's essential that we review our past and continue planning for our future. Here to give a review of the years accomplishments is our past mayor Bianca Padilla.

Bianca takes podium

Thank you Colleen. It seems like just last year I gave this speech. 2009 truly was a year of great successes in Holtville.

In 2009, we started the largest capital improvement project in over twenty years. Our \$5 million dollar water improvement project is near completion, and the best part is that \$1 million dollar of that project was funded through a grant from the Department of Agriculture. The project not only includes the 2.5 million gallon storage tank, but improvements to our raw water ponds that will increase our water production and allow for future development and growth.

I am very proud of some of our recent infrastructure improvements, but as a resident, and someone who also benefits from them, I am truly thankful. We made timely repairs to our storm water system; replaced 60 year old man holes; and upgraded facilities at our sewer plant.

If you live in Holtville you know that Walnut Avenue is under construction. This major street overhaul project should be completed in early March. And you will be impressed with the results. You will enjoy sidewalks, curb and gutters, and a smooth new street as you shop at Del Sol Market, Polar Bear Restaurant, and the Taco Shop.

We are happy to report that our Redevelopment Agency Façade Improvement Program helped defray the start up costs for a new business in town. John Procks, Hot Rods and Beer.

There are also plans underway for business growth; Performance Mechanics, Keithly Williams Seed and others have expansions plans on the table. Our award winning downtown design study reduced development requirements which resulted in reduced business start up costs. We are growing Holtville's economy, and the one thing that we can all do... to make Holtville's business community grow and prosper...is to shop local. Shop in Holtville.

While we can appreciate our successes this past year, our true measure of success is the quality of life we enjoy. We are fortunate that here in Holtville we have a great quality of life. Richard Layton will review the true measure of our city's success...that is in the quality of life we all share.

Richard takes the podium

Holtville has a unique charm, is family friendly, and promotes healthy living. Council has committed our resources to improving the quality of life for our citizens. Our parks are the best in the valley. Last year we made them even better with electrical upgrades at Mack Park, remodeling of Samaha Park restrooms, and cleaning up Earl Walker park.

The City was awarded grant funds to clear brush along the Alamo River for future park development. We just recently worked with Holtville Little League and the Soccer Club to approve a project at Mack Park.

After much discussion and debate the Chamber of Commerce marquee sign was completed...and we got it right. The sign looks great.

Our skate park project has moved from the discussion and planning stage to development. The park location was selected by a majority of Council and plans are underway to build it at the tennis courts in Samaha Park.

Council also approved the design plans for the public safety building. The construction documents are at the County for review. Soon our fire and police departments will be relocated to 6th and Pine. They are currently stationed in a rented office building and a converted tin warehouse that is too small for our needs. Ensuring a safe and healthy community is vital.

As you know the City just recently replaced our police department with the Imperial County Sheriff. Let me assure you that the City takes our responsibility to protect our citizens seriously. The Sheriff is in Holtville. In fact, he is here tonight along with our new Chief of Police, Clint Erro. And WE, the City and Sheriff, continue to protect our citizens. We are not compromising our commitments to those we serve, and I would like to thank our community for its continued support during this time of change and transition.

Our fire department is second to none. Thank you Chief Silva. Holtville has our fire station staffed every day all day. Our fire fighters are trained and ready to roll, and this past year through the CERT program we certified eight residents in emergency readiness so we can call upon them if needed.

This past month we implemented a program that is very near and dear to the hearts of this Council. Our 'you spray you pay' anti-graffiti campaign. I am proud to report that through the cooperation of the public works crew, police department, and the volunteer efforts of Turning Point Ministries. It is working. We have cleaned up graffiti and just recently the Holtville deputies made a major arrest. After getting a call from a concerned citizen Holtville deputies responded and were able to get one more tagger off the streets. Remember report graffiti to our hot line, which rings at the Holtville police station.

Holtville families also benefit from our fine schools. I know, I graduated from Holtville High in 1971. This past year, Holtville High School received the Distinguished School Award a coveted honor for California schools. The School Board and Superintendent, Jon La Dedoux, should be commended. As a parent and grand parent, I appreciate the teachers and staff that make it their goal to teach our children.

I would like to turn the microphone over to Council Member David Bradshaw who will give you an update on the city's financial condition.

David takes podium

Thank you Richard. First and foremost, I'd like to say that regardless of what the Imperial Valley Press reports...The City's budget is balanced and we will continue to provide cost effective public services and be good stewards of our taxpayers' money.

The state budget is \$42 billion dollars in the red. The governor plans to take our transportation funds, cut our sales tax dollars, and raid our redevelopment agency. Reports from the California League of Cities say that it will get worse before it gets better.

The impacts of our current economy are far-reaching, not only to our citizens' personal finances but to our budget. Like so many families and businesses throughout the nation, we are tightening our belts too, and finding ways to do more with less. To keep our budget balanced, we put into place an agreement that improves the way we provide police services; we brought in over \$3 million in grant funds this past year; refinanced water bonds and took advantage of very low interest rates; and we

implemented cost saving measures including our 'work smarter not harder' best practices in our finance department.

The Federal stimulus program is working here in Holtville. We are the first city in the valley to get a street construction project started with ARRA funds. All totaled in this first round of federal funds, we were awarded \$1 million dollars in street projects. The Walnut Avenue project, which we talked about earlier; the improvements to the west side of Holt Avenue between 9th and 10th Street, and the undergrounding of the Alamo canal and street improvements on 9th Street from Holt to Cedar. The projects are being constructed by valley contractors and Holtville residents are working on site.

We are very excited about a new grant source for Holtville. The Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) approved only 5 projects in the State of California and 3 of them, totaling over a half million dollars, were awarded to the City of Holtville. The three projects will fund engineering and design of our sewer outfall main line, and much needed sewer and water system improvements for the north end of town.

We have also been very successful in our applications for economic development funds through the California Development Block Grant program. We received \$600,000 for façade improvements and business loans. These programs are proven to work, and during these challenging economic times, our community relies on the City's ability to support local businesses now more than ever.

While these are certainly tough budgetary times, the residents of Holtville should take comfort in knowing their local tax dollars are in good hands. I applaud our city staff for their hard work, commitment and diligence; for their creative approaches to stretching dollars and cutting costs without cutting services. We know that our employees are our most valuable asset. We have great confidence in their abilities and expertise to provide fire protection, fresh clean potable water, sanitary sewer, green and beautiful parks, clean and well maintained streets, development planning, engineering, and all of the administrative services that go along with a full service city.

To wrap things up I'll turn the microphone over to our Mayor.

Colleen takes podium

Thank you Council members for helping us take a look at our past successes, and our great plans for the future.

I believe Holtville is a village. We were founded by a dreamer with a true pioneer spirit. We will renew that pioneer spirit, and we'll plant seeds for the future. Because that's just who we are and where we've come from. We are experiencing difficult times and we are in the midst of change, but with a certainty, our resilience will prevail.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can't tell you what an honor it is to serve as Mayor of Holtville. Thank you for being here this evening and for everything you do to make Holtville the special place that it is.