

Mayor gives State of the City address

By [Nancy Blanford](#) November 18, 2008

Williamsburg Mayor Jeanne Zeidler gave her second State of the City address to residents at the Williamsburg Community Building Monday night, expanding upon issues like the economy and town and gown relations.



Photo By Jack Hohman- The Flat Hat

Williamsburg City Council members sat on either side of Zeidler as she delivered her speech. Much of the audience had to stand during the address due to the unexpectedly high attendance.

“This is a remarkable turnout to the second event designed to report the state of the city,” Zeidler said.

College of William and Mary Student Assembly President Valerie Hopkins '09 also found the event to be a great success.

“I thought it was wonderful; I’m glad so many people came out to see it,” Hopkins said.

Zeidler emphasized many concerns during her address including the economic situation of the city. Despite economic turmoil at the national, state and local levels, Zeidler discussed the city’s fiscal condition, ensuring residents that the city has a history of conservative spending.

“There was a sharp decline in revenues for lodging, meal and sales tax,” Zeidler said. “We must prepare for a deep and lengthy recession. We go into this process knowing our underlying strengths.”

The mayor also emphasized the promising real estate situation of the city, stating that Williamsburg should see more real estate development in the area, particularly at the developing High Street.

Zeidler also addressed concerns regarding the College that have arisen due to recent budget cuts.

“The College ... is no longer state supported, but state assisted, and it is decreasingly so,” Zeidler said.

“These institutions will not only survive, but also thrive ... [due to a network] of alumni ... and strong supporters in this community.”

Hopkins praised Zeidler’s attention to the economy.

“It’s difficult to confront our economic situation on so many levels, but Mayor Zeidler did a wonderful job addressing it,” Hopkins said.

Williamsburg’s 2009 and 2010 Goals, Initiatives and Outcomes publication has been released and can be found on the city’s website. Zeidler outlined some of the prominent features of this year’s proposal, highlighting some town-gown issues like zoning ordinances and students living off-campus.

The recent presidential election brought a large number of student voters to polls this year as the 2008 elections were the first presidential elections in which College students could register to vote in the city, a situation that Zeidler praised.

“Through well-organized voter registration drives, our city saw the greatest ... increase of new voters in Virginia,” she said. “Due to the efforts on the campus of William and Mary ... 2,200 to 2,400 students registered to vote in Williamsburg.”

Zeidler also mentioned recent talks of a possible change to the three-person rule, which bars more than three unrelated people from living in a house together. SA and city representatives developed a proposal to potentially allow for up to four unrelated people to rent a home in the Williamsburg area.

“We begin by recognizing that 55 percent of housing in the city are rental units,” Zeidler said.

The mayor said the city’s aim is to lower the rental unit number to 50 percent.

“The city deploys many strategies to protect neighborhoods,” Zeidler said. “We need to construct a productive relation on this matter [and] I am confident we will do just that.”

The address gave many residents a chance to see exactly what City Council members and city administrators have achieved, as well as what they are planning.