



## PRESS RELEASE

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### *City of Rockford Citizens Support Road Referendum*

ROCKFORD – “On Tuesday, our citizens spoke!” announced Mayor Larry Morrissey. “Passing the referendum shows that we are ready to change the old way of doing business in Rockford!”

The overwhelming support for the referendum will allow the city the ability to leverage a 1% sales tax to bring the sales tax to 8.25%. The additional revenues are estimated to be approximately \$90 million dollars over the five-year life of the tax. The tax dollars are earmarked for the funding of a five-year Capitol Improvement Plan (CIP) which will focus on the rebuild and repair of the city’s infrastructure. As pointed out by Patrick Zuroske, the City of Rockford CIP Administrator, “When we began discussing funding for the infrastructure upgrades, we knew that a sales tax would be the most fair. At the same time, we felt we had to hold ourselves accountable to the citizens. We did this in two ways. First, we put a five-year sunset clause on the tax. Second, we partnered it with a very specific CIP plan that allowed everyone to see how we would spend those tax dollars.”

The level of accountability built into the tax referendum is seen as one of the factors that helped to sway the voters. The second factor has been the combined support of the Citizens for Rebuilding Rockford (CFRR) and the Rockford City Council. “I can not give the CFRR enough credit. These were private citizens and business leaders that dedicated their time and talents to something they believed in. They believed in a better Rockford, and they went out and spread that message to our voters” stated

Mayor Morrissey. “Our Aldermen were also a big part of the success. They spent their weekends going door to door, organized neighborhood meetings, and spent countless hours talking to the constituents. This is an example of the change elected officials can affect when we work in partnership.”

Passing the referendum is the first step in upgrading the city’s infrastructure. City officials are also hoping that Senator Syverson’s bill to move the ability to collect taxes to July 1<sup>st</sup> of this year will make it through the State Senate in the very near future. “Obviously sooner rather than later would be better” replied Zuroske when asked about the availability of funds. “We have many of the pieces in place to move forward on these projects and we would like to take advantage of as many days of the 2007 construction season as possible.”

The City’s Public Works Department celebrated the referendum in a slightly different manner. “We have work to do,” says Director Bill Bittner. “Passing the referendum allows us to get that work done.”