

Mayor's Report to Council January 2005

In our *Code of Ordinances* under "Duties of the Mayor" it says, "To prepare and present to the council an annual report of the city's affairs including a summary of reports of department heads, and such other reports as the council shall require." So as we begin the year I'm going to do a little of that tonight.

As you know we don't have much in the way of Dept. Heads, but as I have previously reported to Council, I'm very proud of the way our Clerks have reorganized City Hall this year, created a new filing system for old documents by individual address, produced a new Directory which has been thoroughly researched as never before, collected and closed out ALL our back taxes that had accumulated for years. You will recall as well that we are moving on to create a records retention system that will make a real difference for us as well. Also as I've previously reported, we have been studying the process by which our Ordinance Enforcement Officer works, with an eye to making that process more efficient and effective. Council has received some written documentation of that effort. In response to Council's concern about homeowners' security and the theft incident one citizen experienced during a building project, Charlie has ceased to post much of the information on our website that he used to, but I've asked him to continue to post variance requests and our court docket there. I hope Council will concur with my judgment in this.

Another thing we began anew in this past year was the *Mayor's Message*, and nothing else that we've done has received so much positive response from citizens. I've been surprised by the number of them who've sought me out to say that they've never before really known what was going on in the City and that they appreciate this. I know that some councilmembers feel that some of these are unnecessary, but I would urge you to talk with citizens about that.

No report to you would be complete without some overview of finances. You have received a copy of our official 2004 budget and you will note that in general we have significantly underspent this year. Most years about this time we're scurrying around to amend our budget to catch up on our overexpenditures, but I'm happy to report that that will not be necessary this year. We're supposed to do that if we are 10% over in any area. I want to point out the only 2 areas in which we're over any at all. In General Government we are 5% over, and Public Safety is 1% over. Neither even approaches the 10% mark. On the details of those overages I believe I have already made council aware, but for our citizens: we have overspent for our Clerks because when this budget was created City Hall was open less hours and we didn't have a Deputy Clerk at all, and as you've heard a minute ago, they've just done a whole lot more. We also overspent somewhat on our OEO. We did budget back then for a Public Works Director which salary funds we haven't used so that's an offset. Also not in the original budget were our significant engineering expenses for Precision Planning, which Council wanted during the year to help manage the new River District development, and the cost of dam repair which was not expected at that time. But our bottom line expenditures were expected to

be \$807,039 and we have yet to spend \$225,107 of that. The Jan. 1 bond payment has not been recorded yet so that will bring it down about another \$147,000, but even with that we're almost \$80,000 better off now than we expected to be. All in all an excellent year financially.

I've gathered reports from our committee chairs and presented them to Council and posted them on the website. I want them to be attached to the minutes of this meeting. Taken as a whole I think our committees have generally made a good start for our first year. It's been said that our councilmember liaisons could be more involved with committees next year and I've said that I think that's a positive goal. Exactly how they will do that is a source of some controversy.

This controversy basically resurrects an old issue that is continuing to trouble us, which is - how our small City should be administered. The previous Council wanted a City Manager, and I respect that as an honorably held belief on their part that it would be best for the City. However, I don't think they made that case to the citizens. I said back then and repeated to Council here as recently as a month or so ago that I have no personal objections to a city manager if we could afford it and if citizens want it. I don't think either of those conditions exists now, but I don't see the idea as inherently evil (as some seem to do) and I recognize that some day we may be forced to have it if some other way cannot be found to work well. **I believe in most areas of life that it's best to try less extreme changes first to see if they solve problems, and if they don't then move on to larger modifications. That seems a good general principal to me.**

My response to the changes to Chap. 3 that George has proposed was similar. Indeed the scope of the changes seemed very similar, just removing the same administrative tasks from the Mayor in one case to a City Manager, and in this case to a newly conceived system of Departmental Officials. Again I said there was nothing in there that I couldn't live with, but that I didn't really see why we couldn't try less drastic changes first. I vetoed the ordinance, not so much because of those reservations (although I do have them) but mainly because I couldn't feel that it was right to rush through something that Council was so split on, and that they had voted on in such confusion without any written copy. The citizens who spoke that night unanimously urged us not to do that, and I respected their comments. As I agonized over this decision I studied our Code, which says and I quote:

Every proposed ordinance should be introduced in writing and in the form required for final adoption.

I made this very difficult decision based only on what I thought was best for our City without regard to personalities or politics. I am deeply saddened to feel now that in doing so I have somehow stirred up the worst in both. I have been told that in making this veto I let someone perceived as my political enemy "win." Although I do understand the pain of past wounds, and in fact continue to feel them myself, **I say to you all that I will not make decisions for this City based on any political group's winning or losing. I**

categorically reject that whole mindset, and I respectfully urge you all to do the same.

As we begin a new year, there is work to be done. To that end, I have spent much time and effort in recruiting committee members, and chairs for 2005. You have before you that list which was likewise made without regard to politics. If there is any person in this City who offers to contribute time and talents to the City, I will work beside him or her appreciatively. When I disagree with them, and I'm sure that will happen, I will try my best not to be disagreeable. On the list you will also see my suggestions for council liaisons. Councilmembers, you have been urged by one of your colleagues not to participate as a liaison on the fairly startling premise that these roles are undefined (although that didn't bother anybody a year ago) and (even more weird to me) that you would be serving the Mayor and not the Council. **I submit that this is creating a conflict where there is none and a lot of negativity that is regrettable to say the least. I ask not that you serve me (I never have!) but that you serve the City and its citizens!**

I certainly believe that you can and should do that now without waiting for a month or two until some new thing is or is not accepted. As I said before, there is work to be done. Should you choose not to participate with a committee, that is your right and we will regretfully make arrangements as best we can to go on without you.

You have the list before you and have had time to review it before this meeting. Is there any councilmember who will not serve?