

Our City

Sometimes you just have to help where you can by doing what you can. At the time it may seem straightforward and not the least bit complicated, but then it gets that way in a hurry. You've likely been there; someone needed something and you thought you could lend a helping hand so you did. Only to find out shortly after it wasn't going to be as straightforward or simple as you originally thought; but you are committed, so you see it through.

A few City Council meetings ago we held a public hearing on the proposed new water, waste water and sanitation rates. At the public hearing was a resident of the Sunbeam Estates, a minor subdivision. As a person on fixed income living by themselves they had several concerns about the rates, but more so about their inability to pay their bills separately. The idea behind the estates as a retirement complex was a good one I think; but the infrastructure under it is lacking in my opinion. The 11 homes are essentially serviced by one City water valve, leaving no way to turn off homes that are unoccupied or whose owner refuses to pay their water and sewer bill. It is all covered under their Home Owners Association (HOA) covenants and fees; currently very much out of the City's purview. Their situation is troublesome to be sure and I agreed to meet with the HOA leadership to discuss the matter. Our initial meeting was productive and possible solutions were discussed. Since the original meeting both Water and Waste Water Superintendent Scott Dalling and Jeff Nelson our Building Administrator have gone to assess what could actually be done to remedy the problem. Things have gotten really complicated in a hurry; but we will keep working towards an equitable solution.

In my almost 40 years of public service I think the single most important thing I have learned is that people, students or adults, often just need to know that someone cares about them. That help and solutions can sometimes be the result of finding someone who cares I think is often a bonus to many; appreciated to be sure but not always expected. I am not naïve enough to think I or we the City can solve every problem; but I am okay with not succeeding if I know I did my very best for those whom I knew needed help. So, we will keep working on the dilemma at Sunbeam Estates because it is the right thing to do.

Sometimes to solve the problem you just have to bite the bullet and do the hard thing. For years you have known it as well as I have that our watering of especially South City and Lee Street Parks has been ineffective at best. I preach all the time about using proven conservation practices; yet fail to implement them within the areas we manage. The installation of new and updated systems in both parks has begun as I said it would in the September 12th column. As written previously the City Water Department now has the ability to measure actual water use in our parks and other recreations areas so we can be better stewards of our water and its use.

Another area of stewardship that we will be addressing this fall is our potential ability to house two of our most expensive pieces of equipment; our sanitation or garbage trucks. City crews with the approval of the Council could begin constructing a pole building out at the City Parks and Recreation shop at Willow Bay this fall. It is not as straightforward as it seems. If we can get the legal pieces put together additional storage may be included to house all the Parks Department's mowers, equipment and trucks getting them out of the weather as well. Leaving more room at the golf course to put all their equipment under one roof. I mention legal pieces

because the proposed pole building will be constructed with Sanitation funds. Those funds can only be used within the Sanitation Department; any other use must be paid back under contract at the current interest rate. We did something similar when we built the new golf clubhouse a few years ago. I think it is a proactive thing to do. I hope it doesn't get more complicated!

Until next week...