

## Coffee with the Mayor

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No flavored coffee this past week, just my good old Gevalia brand. Did have a couple cups of McDonalds coffee though, senior coffee with three creams! Taste good every now and then. Normally one cup in the morning is my usual, sometimes two depending on the morning. However, in the evenings I really enjoy a cup of warm apple cider or hot chocolate. Something about a good cup of warm cider!

Hard to believe it's the first of December with Christmas only three weeks away! I've been reminded by several people that I have almost completed one year! While that is true by the calendar, it seems like it has been much longer than one year. Not sure why that is. Maybe because this was a leap year, but that's only 1 day more. Usually, the time for reflection is at the end of the year in preparation of starting a new year. Think I'll move that up and reflect on my first year.

One question I am asked a lot is "knowing what I know now would did I make the right decision to run?". There have been some variations to my answer but mainly, and most recently, the answer is "probably not". That answer is not so much about the position and what I've learned but about the freedom to visit my daughters' family and grandsons! I knew it would be restrictive on travel, but it gets harder every time we speak on the phone or Facetime. My youngest daughter wasn't pregnant when I put my hat in the ring and now her son is 8 months old and changing daily. I knew it would be difficult but it's much harder than I expected.

Regarding the position itself, I feel like the first year has been successful overall! The first couple months were definitely a whirlwind of activity! Learning about mayoral responsibilities and networking with other mayors were my first actions. Learning my fellow employees not only at city hall but the utility, fire and police departments was a priority. I was surprised at all the new friends I had that had something to sell or proposals to offer the city! There were daily emails, phone calls and visits from people from various companies and organizations. Other than a water infrastructure replacement plan, I didn't have a clear picture of what the city's basic needs were let alone how best to address those needs. Needless to say, there were a lot of "thanks, I'll get back with you" answers.

One of my first priorities was to establish a dog park where owners could take their dogs to run off leash. Pet owners were using ball diamonds for that purpose, which is not the best. Spoke with several people who agreed a dog park would be a community asset. At that point, I thought the best location would be the area known as Oak Grove! That project started roughly in the Feb/Mar timeframe and took more planning than expected. Sink holes located in the area became a concern for the Department of Natural Resources to address. Fencing contractor, water line and shelters needed to be added. All that took

time. Now, at the end of the season, the dog park is almost ready to open. The name of the park was changed from Oak Grove to Evan Witty Memorial Park in memory of Evan Witty. When the gates are installed, and signs added the park will be available for use.

One priority was to address the aging water infrastructure. Several engineering firms were contacted and evaluated. The decision came down to Commonwealth Engineering. They were highly recommended by other communities with a solid background in utility management. A contract was awarded, and we are currently awaiting their plan. They are to provide a five-year, phased in plan for replacing/updating our aging infrastructure. That plan should be ready in late December or early January.

Many updates have been made at Humphrey's Park. The Park Board and Pride in the Park have contributed significantly over the years to make the park what it is today. I receive comments almost daily on how well the park looks thanks to a city employee. The Conservation Club Committee is looking at ways to make that area available to the general public for recreation. As to the park, the main concern is the future of the pool. Much has been written and discussed about the possibility of its closing. Stay tuned for more on that subject.

Those two are the main focus of projects I have been working on this year. Thanks to state funding by the Community Crossings Grant and our matching funds, we were able to contract for the much-needed paving of several streets and replacement of sidewalks. The Fire Fighter training facility became a reality. This facility provided by the state, with local assistance, will be an asset for our Fire Department as well as firefighters from the surrounding areas. The Police Department continues to provide safety and security to the community with a combination of new and experienced personnel. Our utility departments have been very active around the city. The Gas and Water department keeps water flowing and has repaired water and gas lines on a daily basis at all hours. The Street department has made significant gains in documenting and clearing sewer lines in addition to addressing street concerns, maintaining city vehicles and collecting the trash. The Electric Department, Linton Power and Light, continues to replace aging polls and deals with storm damage and outages in order to restore electricity. The cemetery and golf course are two of the lesser-known city departments, both significant assets for the community.

There have been many walk-ins over the year wanting specific concerns to be addressed. I try to understand the issue and determine if it's the responsibility of the city to address, one that can be addressed jointly or the person's responsibility. They don't always agree with the answer. I can honestly say it's been an interesting first year in office!