

Getting Lean in Evansville

Early this month I attended the 2013 Wisconsin Lean Government Conference in Madison. Sponsored by the Wisconsin Center for Performance Excellence and the Local Government Institute of Wisconsin, the theme for the day was "do more better." Held annually, this was the third lean government conference, and I have attended all.

Lean is a system of thinking and method of working focused on reducing waste of time and material costs when providing the same or improved customer value. Lean originated in the Toyota Motor Corporation and the manufacturing arena. Lean concepts are applicable in all work environments. The June 2013 issue of "Government Finance Review," a publication of the Government Finance Officers Association, was dedicated to lean initiatives in the public workplace.

Lean is laser-locked on customer service. Lean governments are continuously looking to serve constituents more effectively and less expensively. Savings are frequently found by studying the service process. Lean efforts are incremental; over time waste reduction will provide customer benefits. The power of lean is in transforming the organizational culture to internalize the goal of continuous improvement.

In a series of Committee of the Whole meetings over the past two years, the Evansville Common Council and Department Heads identified over-arching city goals of top notch customer service, enhancement of local quality of life, and ongoing drive for excellence. These are the concepts of lean.

As I participated in a conference session on lean in the City of Oshkosh, I began a list of recent activities and efforts in Evansville that have lean components. Here are some of the list items.

- The recent Common Council approval of the waste collection contract includes changing to mechanized pick-up. The cost for mechanized collection is less than continuing with the current bag system. The new collection process is simpler; the current tag purchase system for extra garbage will be discontinued. Covered trash containers will reduce blowing trash in neighborhoods. There will be improved recycling of electronic waste.
- Changing the blade arrangement on snowplows has resulted in fewer passes to clear a street, reducing the time needed to plow a street.
- The Water & Light Utility plan increases looping in the distribution system, improving reliability for utility customers. Segmentation allows

quicker service restoration for customers during animal-caused and weather-related outages.

- Integration of utility and general city recordkeeping into one accounting system eliminated duplication of effort. Updated accounting software and associated staff training provides efficient reporting and improved information.
- The Common Council adopted a number of financial policies, including purchasing, investment, debt management, fund balance, and donations policies, to better guide decision-making. These policies are among the fiscal information that was analyzed by Standard and Poor's Rating Service in obtaining our first bond rating. Our A+ rating resulted in a remarkably low bond interest rate that has reduced debt service costs for residents.
- GIS (Global Information System) mapping has been implemented. GIS allows onsite availability of project information. The layering of information in one resource increases efficiency and effectiveness of city staff.
- The city has greatly increased its focus on best practices in service delivery. Evansville Water & Light received RP3 designation for its commitment to best practices in utility safety and reliability. EMS is currently updating its Standard Operating Procedures Manual. Next month the Evansville Police Department will undergo accreditation assessment by WILEAG, the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Accreditation Group. Consistent use of public safety best practices and procedures is the focus of accreditation.
- The city realigned some functions, in addition to a staff departure, and developed a new position of community development director. This position provides daily in-house planning services and dedicated economic development activity. The improved service, in particular to our business community, is already evident.

There are many other lean initiatives that have been undertaken in Evansville. The combination of reducing costs/waste and improving service results in win-win outcomes.

The Council recognizes the importance of well-trained, knowledgeable, and invested staff in accomplishing lean and encourages and supports attendance at trainings, seminars, and classes to enhance employment skills. Likewise, Council participation in conferences and seminars can hone skills benefitting our community.

“Do more better” is short-hand for our goals of top notch customer service, enhanced local quality of life, and continual drive for excellence. Citizens should expect lean for the foreseeable future in Evansville local government.

Community Announcements

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day will be observed this Saturday, October 26, at the Evansville Police Department, 10 West Church Street, from 8 to 11 a.m. Unused prescription and over-the-counter drugs will be collected by the Police Department and BASE (Building A Safer Evansville). If possible, leave all medications in their original containers with personal information blocked out. Sharps in safe containers will also be collected for disposal only this day. Sharps are not accepted in the drop box.

The Evansville Grove Society annual meeting will be held this Sunday, October 27, 2013, at Creekside Place, 102 Maple Street. The social hour will begin at 4:30 p.m., followed by potluck supper at 5:00 p.m. The business meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. Historian Ruth Ann Montgomery will present a program on Vie Campbell-Social Reformer at the conclusion of the business meeting. This event is free and open to the public.

Representatives from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) will host a Flood Map Information Open House on Wednesday, October 30, starting at 6:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at Marshall Middle School Cafeteria, 25 South Pontiac Drive, in Janesville. Preliminary revisions to Rock County flood maps will be displayed and reviewed.

Ghosts, zombies, goblins, and many other creatures and characters will be trick-or-treating this Thursday, October 31, from 5-7 p.m. Please exercise extra care driving near our excited youth.

Third grade students will make their annual visits to City Hall next week. Seven classes will tour the nooks and crannies (the old jail, walk-in safe, mayor’s office, and Council Chambers) and have Q&A with the mayor.

Community Congratulations/Thanks

The disc golf course is now installed at Leonard-Leota Park. Evansville congratulates and thanks Mark Sendelbach, Todd Campbell, Bob Buri, and the donors and volunteers supporting development of this terrific new recreational amenity.