

Mayor's Column for October 5, 2011 Review

Happy October! Happy Fall! The latest forecast is for delightful Indian Summer this week, perfect weather for Homecoming festivities and our scheduled City Hall visitors. Eight classes of third graders will walk to City Hall, tour the building, and participate in a question and answer session with the mayor.

Always of interest to the students are the old jail with the barred cell door still intact, the walk-in office safe, and the fire escape. New for this year's students is seeing the original large brass key to the jail.

There are always a couple of surprise questions from our youth, often reflecting what is currently happening around them. The time spent with our students is important and provides valuable community connections. Over the years more than one youngster has surprised me with a hug at the Pig or on the street. Such exuberance always warms my heart and makes me smile.

City Hall is in the midst of the annual budgeting process. A few needed numbers are still trickling in that will provide a complete view of our task. This year has provided many twists and turns as we anticipated the local budget impacts of proposed and enacted federal and state legislation.

The Common Council is very sensitive to the current economic stresses on our residents. We are also committed to maintaining our public infrastructure and safeguarding our quality of life. The Council works hard to provide an appropriate balance that is in everyone's best interest. Following the Finance Committee meeting this Thursday evening, the budget will be prepared for First Reading at the October 11 Common Council meeting. A public hearing and action on the 2012 city budget is scheduled for the November 8 Council meeting.

Next week I will attend a day-long conference on Lean Government at Monona Terrace in Madison. This follow-up program to a multi-venue Spring 2011 meeting, entitled "Doing More with Less," will explore long-term improvements to delivery of service, possible collaborations and consolidations, and how to best leverage scarce tax dollars. I will share seminar takeaways with Council, City Staff, and citizens.

This month City Hall is undertaking a significant project that will increase our work efficiency, improve our accounting operations, and position us for future recordkeeping requirements. After training and installation, for the first time in decades the City will have one accounting system that will provide required records for both general operations and our utility. The software training will begin later this month. This is a good local example of operating "lean."

In two weeks the League of Wisconsin Municipalities will hold their annual conference in Milwaukee. Several of the breakout sessions will focus on economic development.

There are also sessions on government ethics, transparency, and negotiation. My guess is that citizens would like to see these topics at state and federal conferences also.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the long view is required of local governments to address U.S. economic and political realities. I am confident that Evansville elected officials will continue to emphasize local financial stability as they research the best opportunities to improve service, implement “lean” initiatives, enhance our quality of life, and grow our community infrastructure.

Community Announcements

Please remember that only leaves are to be raked into the gutter for fall pick-up. Sticks, branches, and garden refuse can clog city equipment and cause possible injury; do not include them in the leaf piles. These other materials are accepted at the City waste yard.

It is Homecoming week. Go Blue Devils!

The Creekside Place Health Fair will be held on Friday, October 7, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. It is free and open to the public.

Eager Free Public Library will host an artist reception and exhibit for local nature artist Bud Cufaude on Friday evening, October 7, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Refreshments will be provided by the Evansville Farmer’s Market.

Evansville Boy Scout Troop 514 will hold a food drive on Saturday, October 8. Their goal is to collect one ton of food for the Evansville Care Closet and Food Pantry. Toiletry items such as shampoo, toothpaste, and deodorant, as well as boxed and canned non-perishable foods like cakes mixes, jello, stuffing, macaroni and cheese, stews, and cereal should be bagged and placed on your front porch by 8 a.m.

The Creekside Place first annual Octoberfest beer and food sampling will be held on Saturday, October 8, from 6-10 p.m. For ticket information, contact www.creeksideplace.org or call 882-0407.

The Evansville Fire District will hold their annual spaghetti dinner fundraiser on Sunday, October 9, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Fire Station. See you there!

Community Thanks

Last week I completed a Thrive stakeholder survey. Thrive is the eight county Madison Region economic development organization that includes Rock County. They are launching a new economic development effort called Advance Now and the survey is one of the first steps of the initiative. One of the survey questions was to rate volunteerism in the local community on a continuum from excellent to poor. I rated Evansville’s volunteerism as excellent.

The same day I took the survey, I read an e-mail that provided an update on the Grove Community School Forest Trail project. Photos and descriptions of recent work were evidence of the significant volunteer efforts of citizens to make a special community learning environment. I thank the Boy Scouts, Lions Club, Woodchucks, David Huset, Phil and Nancy Kress, and numerous citizen volunteers for the ongoing dedication to enhancing the School Forest Trail. It will be enjoyed by the community for decades.

Our community is enriched by the many volunteer projects continually undertaken by our citizens. We all benefit from these efforts. I encourage you to pay it forward; excellent plus is a good goal.