

## Mayor's Column for the July 27, 2011 Evansville Review

In last week's Review, City Administrator Dan Wietecha wrote about the development of the 2012 City budget over the next few months. He outlined the budget process and explained the expected impacts of the state budget on our local City finances. After months of concern and uncertainty as legislative proposals were advanced in Madison, I also now believe that while our intergovernmental revenues will be lower, the City of Evansville 2012 budget will be tight but "doable," without severe cuts to departments and services.

The Common Council will begin budget preparation at meetings in the next several weeks. At the August 9 regular Council meeting, there will be a focus on financial information. A representative from our long-time financial advisor, Ehlers, will review our current financial condition and provide important context by looking at how our situation relates to that of other municipalities.

Results of the Johnson Block 2010 City audit will be considered, with some attention to year-to-year comparison of budget results. We will also discuss information obtained from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance that provides historical budget comparisons for Wisconsin municipalities. We will look at the City's use of property tax as a source of revenue through the years as well.

Last Friday the agenda for the July 25 Committee of the Whole meeting was distributed. It is a different animal and focuses on strategic thinking in delivery of services and use of scarce tax dollars. Following beginning procedural agenda items is this lead-off question: What is the purpose of The City of Evansville as an organization?

The Chris Rickert opinion column in the July 23, 2011 "Wisconsin State Journal" echoes my concept of local government in its discussion of the continued relevancy of the Wisconsin Idea. Rickert provides UW-Madison Associate Professor of Political Science Kathy Cramer Walsh's description of the Wisconsin Idea as "a tradition of responsive, transparent government . . . that seeks to enhance the well-being of citizens." Robert LaFollette and Charles Van Hise, with ties to Evansville through schooling at the Evansville Seminary, promoted the Wisconsin Idea a century ago. The Idea is seen as a hallmark of good government in our state and at the University of Wisconsin.

Other "big picture" agenda items for the Committee of the Whole meeting include the public value of services provided by the City and the concept of "lean government."

I have been in contact with Al Probst of the UW-Extension Local Government Center in Madison to arrange for him to speak at the next joint Town of Union Board/City of Evansville Council meeting. Among materials Probst forwarded for consideration as topics for a presentation is this definition of lean government. "Lean government is fundamentally about creating value for the customer/client while using the fewest resources possible. It's about getting the right service in the right amount to the right

person at the right time, while minimizing waste and being flexible and open to change and improvement.” As you can see, lean government and public value are intertwined, as well as being related to the Wisconsin Idea.

Probst’s area of expertise is performance measurement, a long-term strategic thinking methodology of evaluation with the goal of improving service efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. We are working to schedule a presentation time in the next several weeks that accommodates his calendar.

City staff and the Common Council take the budget process very seriously. Budget decisions will be carefully reviewed, thoughtful, and deliberate. We are interested in maximizing citizen value with scarce tax dollars and are working with this goal in mind. This is essential to provide the best budget possible for our residents.

We, of course, are interested in suggestions and ideas of the citizens we serve. The City website provides an avenue for making suggestions. Click on “We’re Listening” on the home page at [www.ci.evansville.wi.gov](http://www.ci.evansville.wi.gov). I can be reached by e-mail at [sandy.decker@ci.evansville.wi.gov](mailto:sandy.decker@ci.evansville.wi.gov) or by phone at 882-2266.

We will continue to provide financial information and updates as we move through the budget calendar. The current economic and political environments necessitate increased attention to providing as much information as possible, in a timely manner, to our citizens.

### Community Announcements

Keeping cool has been a priority recently. Creekside Place is open to the public and welcomes citizens needing a place to be cool. Eager Free Public Library is another location open and welcoming to citizens needing relief from the heat. I encourage you to check the well-being of neighbors and family in periods of stressful hot weather.

The East Main Street bridge reconstruction is scheduled to begin this week. Detours around the project area will be required as the bridge is completely rebuilt. The completion of the new bridge is expected in early October.

Saturday, August 6, provides many opportunities for buying local. The annual City-wide Garage Sale Day will be held. Eager Free Public Library will hold its summer Gently Used Book Sale on the Library lawn and the Evansville Farmer’s Market will continue to offer local products at its regular location on East Church Street. The second annual Inside Out Days and Chamber Raffle will be held downtown and there will be additional activities offered by Brown School Road businesses.

Please remember that sale signs are not to be placed on public property, including taping to light poles and traffic signs or placing in the terrace between the sidewalk and the street. Thanks for being considerate of your citizen neighbors.

Community Congratulations/Thanks

Accolades to the cast and crew of “Fiddler on the Roof” for your wonderful presentation of the tradition-themed musical. Evansville Community Theatre has entertained us for decades; we appreciate your efforts and dedication.