

## Mayor's Column for the July 3, 2013 Edition of the Evansville Review

In my last column I mentioned the article, "Ten Habits of Highly-Effective Councils." I wrote about intergovernmental collaboration, and that one of the ten habits was respecting shared constituencies, the recognition that taxpayers expect seamless, efficient, and effective service regardless of the overlapping jurisdictions of governmental entities.

The "Ten Habits..." article was the lead article in the June 2013 edition of *The Municipality*, the monthly magazine of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. The author, Carl Neu, Jr, creator of the Center for the Future of Local Governance, reaches the conclusion that "every community deserves nothing less than a highly effective council that embraces accountability for the community's performance in creating its future and in effectively addressing, in the present, those challenges vital to attaining that future."

The day after I received the magazine at City Hall our City Attorney, Mark Kopp, sent me this e-mail: "I am sure you will find the article in the most recent Municipality magazine entitled '10 habits of highly effective councils' interesting. Much of what the article promotes is already part of the mind set of Evansville's leaders." I had already read the article and also saw a lot of Evansville efforts reflected in the identified habits.

Neu developed this list of habits, skills and fundamental principles of effective local governments, through observations of hundreds of councils over decades.

### 1. Think and act strategically.

Neu observed that strategic leaders have a vision for their community based on understanding of citizen wants and needs. Long-term goals are developed, with decision-making and budgeting focused on implementing the goals to achieve the vision. We have identified top-notch service and excellent quality of life as expectations of our community. Our council decisions, efforts, and budgets are increasingly focused on meeting these expectations. Recent examples of enhancing customer service include Evansville Water & Light RP3 designation and work efforts of the Evansville Police Department to obtain WILEAG accreditation.

### 2. Respect "shared constituency": What do the people need?

I discussed our increased focus on collaborating with the school district, fire district, surrounding towns and county in my previous column. These efforts are necessary to explore "lean" initiatives and enhance customer service. (I recently served on the Rock County Ad Hoc Farmland Preservation Committee. The Director of the Rock County Planning and Development Department served on the selection committee for the Evansville Community Development Director.) We have also ramped up our advocacy by building relationships with our state and federal legislative representatives.

### 3. Understand and demonstrate the elements of teams and teamwork.

Teamwork was a topic at recent Committee of the Whole meetings. We discussed a model of cohesive team behavior built on a foundation of trust. Team building is also a regular focus at monthly City department head meetings.

4. Master small group decision making.

Council members come from varied backgrounds with differing skill sets. Decision-making involves harnessing this diversity to best serve community interests. The Council has adopted a number of financial tools, including fundraising/donation, investment, purchasing, fund balance, and debt management policies, to assist with consistency in decision-making. In our exploration of teamwork, we have discussed the value of vibrant constructive conflict in decision-making and have committed to decorum and civility in our interpersonal relations and meetings.

5. Have clearly defined roles and relationships.

Council members' roles are partly defined by statute and ordinance. The City has also developed a number of committee and departmental reference books to guide performance. The Common Council, working together as a team, will strive to conduct City business to maximize effectiveness.

6. Honor the council-staff partnership.

Policy making-policy implementation is a continuum that transforms ideas into outcomes. Council members and staff ensure success by sharing in this process. Neu points out that this partnership works best when it is vision-focused. Empowering staff to determine the best means for achievement, avoiding the tendency to micromanage implementation activity, strengthens organizational relationships and performance effectiveness.

7. Allocating governing body time and energy appropriately.

The Evansville Common council meets at least 16 times annually. Recently, two or three of the year's meetings are dedicated to Committee of the Whole sessions focused on goal-setting, strategy, and/or issue study. Alders also attend at least two committee/board meetings monthly.

8. Have clear rules and procedures for council meetings.

The Evansville Common Council has defined rules and procedures that provide order and discipline in the conduct of meetings. The City values public input, with agendas of Common Council and committees including opportunities for public comment. The Council strives to undertake city business through effective and productive meetings.

9. Get a valid assessment of the public's concerns and evaluation of the council's performance.

The Park Board just completed a citizen survey to provide current, relevant information to guide development of a new five-year park and recreation plan for the City. A recently completed public survey by the Eager Free Public Library Board gathered information to assist in strategic planning for a future Library expansion. In the next few months, the Common Council will determine the scope of a community survey that will be used, in

conjunction with 2010 U.S. Census information, to update our Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan. The Council has indicated its desire to seek resident satisfaction feedback in the upcoming survey.

10. Practice continuous personal learning and development as a leader.

I have often voiced my belief in continuous learning and skills growth. I participate in seminars and workshops to improve my leadership performance. Council members attend League of Municipalities conferences, financial seminars, and utility forums to increase their skills. Department heads are encouraged to include leadership training in their job goals. City staff is encouraged to participate in customer service trainings and other job-related learning opportunities.

The City of Evansville is actively taking actions to improve leadership effectiveness in these challenging economic and political times. Going forward, the Common Council will be vigilant and disciplined in maintaining our financial strength while addressing citizen expectations. We want the best possible future for Evansville!

### **Community Announcements**

AWARE's "Food for the 4<sup>th</sup>" campaign is underway. Donations of non-perishable foods can be dropped off at BMO Harris Bank, Greenwoods Bank, Union Bank & Trust Company and area churches. Suggested items are peanut butter, tuna, canned meats, boxed dinners, canned fruits, jelly, and cereal. All items will be delivered to the Evansville Care Closet.

Eager Free Public Library is accepting "Food for Fines" through the month of July. Donations benefit the Evansville Care Closet.

Paintings from the Theodore Robinson Plein Air Competition are currently on display at Creekside Place, 102 Maple Street.

The American Red Cross is holding a blood drive on Thursday, July 11, from noon to 6:00 p.m. at Creekside Place. Call 1-800-RED-CROSS to schedule an appointment. Walk-ins are also welcome.

Curbside yard waste pick-up will occur the week of July 8 to July 12.

The City is beginning 2014 budget development. Resident input is encouraged. Please send suggestions to [budget@ci.evansville.wi.gov](mailto:budget@ci.evansville.wi.gov).

### **Community Thanks**

Evansville thanks the following team for the annual downtown flower basket project: Gene Bass, Sarah Bauer, Justin Brooks, Nathan Brooks, Veronica Raemisch, Tony Wyse, and Stonefield Plant Farm. The flowers dress up our downtown.

Our community thanks Sue Berg and Jenny Bammert for promoting Evansville at the Rock County Dairy Breakfast on June 8. One thousand pieces of literature, including the Barn Quilt Brochure, Evansville Tourism Brochure, Evansville Calendar of Events, and the Rock County Tourism Guide were distributed to attendees.