

Column: From the Mayor's desk



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I decided to run for office in 2012 because there were things that needed to be changed. Some problems were obvious and others would be found out in time. I also knew it was going to be hard work and the decisions would be difficult.

The recent layoffs the city had to do were difficult for all of us. I know that managers, councilors and myself lost sleep over the decision. How could we not when we are talking about people and their families that we know?

I cannot sugar coat it, we have had some past problems. Putting off the water treatment plant for years, the Lowes repayment, the auditors' correction of charging employee time, payments on the Albany Canal, the Chief of Police position, the City Manager position, and other issues I am sure I missed.

All of these issues have been or are being addressed. My key focus is to fix the problem, then make sure it does not happen again. Or at least do everything possible to prevent more issues.

We have a plan and have started on the design of the water treatment plant. We paid off the Lowes bill without late penalties. We are having discussions with Albany on the canal and our contract with them.

We have corrected the allocation of employee time, and have processes and procedures that will be put in place when the new City Manager is here so that does not happen again. That is also true of the Lowes issue. All money that needs to be paid out, will be scheduled and put into the budget when the amount and due date is known.

And of course we have a new Chief of Police who is doing a very good job, and the officers are very pleased with their leadership.

Another positive step the council has taken is hiring Gary Marks as our new City Manager. Gary is a budget guru and one of the first things he told me that he wants to

simplify our city budget, so every citizen can understand it. That is very exciting to me and for the city.

On another note, last October former City Councilor Ray Weldon filed another lawsuit against the city trying to get access to confidential information on an issue from several years back. The court already ruled against his claim, but he has filed another suit, now as a citizen. He was also recently passing out fliers saying that some City Councilors should resign because they did not take the oath of office seriously.

It seems to me there has already been a waste of time and money resulting from these lawsuits Mr. Weldon continues to pursue, years later. The citizens should understand that the City is specifically prohibited by state statute from disclosing the personnel records Mr. Weldon seeks, not because the City is trying to hide anything.

There is plenty of blame to go around for some of the situations we have had, and are still experiencing. However, pointing the finger and blaming others is not going to help us move forward.

Mr. Weldon was on the City Council for several terms when many of these problems happened and for him to point to the other councilors and say they should resign is a bit ironic.

While on the council he had the same opportunity that all councilors had to gain information and make sure the City was running smoothly. As I recall, then Councilor Weldon chose not to attend the 2012 Budget Committee hearing, one of the most important parts of the councilors job.

Being a councilor is a big responsibility and they take it seriously. Our City Council members are all regular folks who live in Lebanon and take their personal time to serve our community.

When I took office I wanted to see the council work together in a positive way. I can honestly say the meetings now run very smoothly and we do not have the drama that there used to be. Now, when councilors disagree, they do not attack each other personally. Everyone is treated with respect.

Author and Speaker Denis Waitley said, "Don't dwell on what went wrong. Instead, focus on what to do next. Spend your energies on moving forward toward finding the answer."

I cannot agree more with this statement. I would add that we should not forget the past problems because we can learn from them. But dwelling on them is wasted energy.