

# LEBANON EXPRESS

## **From the Mayor's desk: Mayor sets record straight on police morale; updates on council attitude, policies, goals, city manager search**

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The first two months as mayor have gone by in a flash, but I am very pleased at the progress and positive direction we are moving.

Before I get into details, I wanted to address a few facts that were incorrect in the recent Lebanon Express, and also another claim that is floating around.

The Lebanon Municipal Court has never stopped prosecuting misdemeanors, and in the last year or two, misdemeanor prosecutions have been higher than ever.

One recent example is on Tuesday, Feb. 26 when the court saw 53 individuals with misdemeanor charges filed against them.

Many of those who have been convicted of misdemeanor crimes have spent time in the city jail.

Others have been required to pay fines or perform community service. Lebanon officers know and expect that their hard work will keep many criminals off the streets.

In July of 2009, the police department, municipal court and Information Services moved into the Lebanon Justice Center.

Since that time, Lebanon police have been housing inmates who have been convicted of misdemeanors in our court.

It was mentioned that former Police Chief Ben Silverman never moved into the police chief's office.

The fact is that when Ben Silverman was appointed to the position of chief of police, he moved from the lieutenant's office, located in the patrol area, to the office previously occupied by the city's former chiefs.

There also have been rumors going around about City Manager John Hitt having an office in the justice center. This is not true. He has never had an office in the justice center; his office has always been in City Hall on Main Street.

I have talked with many officers and staff from our police department and I can honestly say, the morale is very good right now. I was approached recently by a long-serving Lebanon officer who made it a point to tell me that morale at the police department has never been higher.

I talked with Acting-In-Capacity Chief Frank Stevenson and he shared, "The police department administrative team is focusing on the future. The morale in the justice center is great. We want our citizens to know that we are here to serve; we will continue to serve; and we are proud to serve the citizens of Lebanon."

Now on to the progress I mentioned earlier.

If you have not been to a council meeting lately, you need to go and see for yourself the change in chemistry and how involved the council has become. If you can't make it in person, check out the city's YouTube channel.

We have had nearly six hours of goal setting in two meetings, and there was a lot of great constructive discussion amongst the council.

The council voted to hire the Prothman Company for our city manager search, and they look very good.

They specialize in the Northwest and understanding our unique lifestyle here.

Also the staff experience in law enforcement and city administration is a perfect mix for our needs. Take a look at the company online.

There was a lot of great discussion and goals that we set on numerous topics such as police staffing, emergency preparedness, economic development, communications to the public, press and employees.

One other important topic was about citizens comments at our public meetings.

We have decided to make a change so that council members may comment or ask questions if the speaker has time remaining, or we take up to two additional minutes.

The former rule of the council not responding to public input was a carry-over.

This council has decided that they want to interact with the public when a quick answer or dialog can happen. If it looks like it would be a longer discussion, or research is needed, then someone from staff or the council will follow-up with them at a later time.

It was a very positive meeting, and I am personally excited about the direction we are moving.

*Mayor Paul Aziz*

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