

LEBANON EXPRESS

Column: Mayor looks forward to new vision



SEPTEMBER 25, 2013 11:31 AM • [FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK, A COLUMN BY PAUL AZIZ](#)

Our new City Manager Dana Hlavac hit the ground running as he took over the helm last month.

He has been very busy meeting with staff, civic and business leaders, and citizens and taking in a lot of information.

Long-term vision

I am excited about many of the things Dana is already working on, especially a long-term vision for our community.

This is something we really need for Lebanon.

A long-term vision and planning will include input from residents, civic and business leaders and city staff.

It will help us plan and create what we want our community to look like 10 to 20 years down the road.

It will help the city council make better decisions as it applies to the long-term vision.

This way, we won't miss things that are critical, such as the past issues in getting a new water treatment plant.

Once we have a vision, it is much easier to develop a strong economic development plan that fits with what our vision for Lebanon is.

That, in turn, will help determine the steps we need to take to get there.

It also gives a guideline for the types of businesses that we want to attract to Lebanon that fit into the vision.

The city has been working with the Rick Franklin Company, and I am excited about a new project.

Rick and his crew are working on an excursion train running from the Santiam Travel Station in Lebanon to Sweet Home.

The city will be renting out the ticket office area of the train station, and they are currently working on a new siding that will come up next to the train station for passenger loading and unloading (wheelchair accessible!) and more parking.

Work is being done this fall, and trips should start in spring or summer next year.

Economic development and bringing jobs to our community is a top priority, but it is not just building new buildings.

Putting together partnerships and using valuable gems such as the historic train station will help bring people to Lebanon, who in turn spend money here, which in turn allows businesses to take advantage of the potential customers.

Not to mention the jobs that the Rick Franklin Corp. will also create.

Mayor's Youth Council

I have been working hard on developing another important aspect of our community, our youth.

We had a meeting last month to discuss the new Mayor's Youth Council, and there is a lot of excitement and interest in this new program.

I want to get high school-age students involved in their local government so they understand it and learn that they have a say and can make positive changes.

The youth council will have a couple of adult advisors and will meet at least once a month.

I am working on updating the city resolution for city advisory boards to include the youth council for our October city council meeting.

There are communities all over the U.S. that have a similar program, and they have done many things on their councils.

When we set up our youth council, there will be some guidelines on how the meetings are handled, but overall the students will be the ones to choose the direction the youth council goes.

Some examples of what different youth councils have done are; a drug turn-in day, putting stickers on alcohol bottles warning of buying alcohol for underage youth during prom and graduation, designing a flag for their town, shoveling snow off fire hydrants during bad weather, participating in city planning meetings to help improve city parks, helping at meet the candidates night for an election, created a senior-to-senior prom where high school youth and seniors had dinner and dancing.

I will be working with the school district to make sure participants can get credit for community service, as this is community service at its best.

We are looking for interested sophomore-senior-aged youth to participate.

Youth must be within the Lebanon Community School District boundaries. They can be home-schooled or in an alternative program.

If you are interested, send me an email and I will make sure to get you the information.

I will be giving a "state of the city" presentation at the Lebanon chamber lunch this Friday, and I will do the same in this column in December, recapping all of the things going on in Lebanon this past year and where we are going in the future.