

Office of the City Manager

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

To: Council

Fr: RES

Re: June Update

Council –

As we approach the end of the year I thought it appropriate to offer some updates and a few thoughts.

Across the past 5 years, the City of Bisbee has had 4 City managers; and across this last year, 30% of my time was as an Interim Manager.

We also experienced a catastrophic fire that destroyed our City Hall and much of our records and historic documents. Since the fire, staff has led a somewhat nomadic life in a temporary environment graciously supported by the County – and staff has overcome uncountable challenges and difficulties in trying to maintain regular services to the community.

Despite all of that, across the last year, and with Council's guidance we have made positive, tangible progress towards bringing the City of Bisbee into a sustainable financial and operational position. And for that we owe staff an incredible debt of gratitude and acknowledgement.

Within 48 hours of the City Hall fire, the entire City Administration was back up and running, with no service outages – to my knowledge that has never been accomplished elsewhere in AZ. Further, services, community events and public maintenance activities across this year were not compromised as we recovered from the fire, establishing records and re-creating operational documents for current work processes.

The amnesty program is a great example – we lost information in the fire, yet moved forward, reconstructed data and made progress, gathering in some \$400,000 from that effort – 30% of the outstanding past due balance.

Facing arguably the most difficult financial circumstances in the City's history, the Council and staff came together to produce a budget that ALL of us understand, ALL of us support, and ALL of us can work shoulder to shoulder with, to overcome challenges in the next year. Together, we also found a way to create a COLA increase, the first in almost a decade, to try and make up for 5 years of frozen increases – at least for non-salaried personnel. The Budget, the Audit and our records were completed and operational on time, and within expectations.

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Aside from being located at a different address, our citizens saw little to no changes in service this year – but I see the toll it’s taken on staff. We look tired – we’re a little cramped for space, and are still making do with temporary solutions while we wait to find permanent space – but now there’s also something different...

Every single one of us has a spark of hope – that we’re going to be able to set things right, put the City on a stable financial path, and work our way out of the messes that surfaced during and after the recession. After so many years of difficulty and controversy, of reductions, layoffs and cuts, we see a way to actually make things work for the better, and a way to change the community’s attitude about its local government -- a way for pride in our community to grow.

We’ve been working so hard, because we really believe in what we are doing, and we believe it is the best possible thing that we can bring to our community, and all of us on this team are working together to put our community first.

- So we launched a new budget approach when it would have been easier to rubber stamp an old process.
- We created new relationships with the County (and as far as I know, new ideas to the state of AZ), to access better pricing and costs for vehicles, fuel and maintenance, and get more for our taxpayers’ money.
- We secured better financing for our sewer system – bringing over \$5M in relief to the City over the next 7 years.
- We now staff police and fire better, to help minimize overtime and empower staff to maintain important fire protection infrastructure. We’ve also changed charge structures to gather more revenues from emergency services provided to non-city service areas. We are mid discussion on the development of subscription based protection services for some county residents that will further increase City revenues. City-wide we have concluded initial research on existing service fees and we are working to propose an updated schedule to Council.
- We deployed computerized payroll using software we already had to save time, and we launched electronic work ordering and a complaint system to give the public yet another way to help us address concerns in the community.

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- The County just approved an IGA for the Council to consider, where we will gain access to additional code and inspection expertise/manpower – all for the same cost that we have been budgeting to support Mr. Ward.
- We've rebuilt our HR records and process from the ground up, and we are creating a classification and compensation plan for our personnel, so we can work towards becoming market competitive in our pay and benefits. PTO Cash-out, promotion and internal hire policies are currently being drafted and will be brought to Council for consideration soon.
- We've secured help from the airport commission to establish a 3rd party to begin to grow the airport, and we've made arrangements for the airport to receive a grant that will upgrade the fuel depot to support jets.
- We've offered and worked on a solution to the Naco Sonora sewerage problem, and we have a way to facilitate discussion with Council over the sale of effluent if the City desires. We are also in talks with the Mine over recharging effluent into our aquifer to sustain our environment.
- We are auditing the wwtp operations to ensure our processes and outcomes are continuously compliant with the State and the Fed, and that our operation yields the best possible water for our environment. Detailed reporting on that will be available soon.
- Our library has expanded to offer satellite facilities at Melody Lane School, and we have launched a reading program to improve reading among young children in our community. The Science Center grant for feasibility analysis is ongoing, and our work with the mine to explore the creation of a foundation and expanded tourism is moving forward.

Our team has accomplished this, and so much more, despite years of frozen wages, the most meagre budgets in recent history, uncertainty in management and constant, ill-informed criticism. Our Team has done incredible things after watching our offices, our work and our history burn to the ground, and we've done it all because we believe in what we are doing, and because we care about our City.

I think we all owe staff, we owe our team, our sincerest thanks and appreciation for their incredible service.