

MikeK re: city wages/benefits:

Here's a little insight, some perspective, and a few facts. There have been foregone raises and voluntary givebacks already during this long recession. Management has been dealing with the employee associations about voluntary rejection of their contracted COLA for this year - providing respectful collaborative leadership to attack budget concerns. That is happening as we speak.

The city population has increased. Demand for services has increased. Yet there are fewer employees providing those services today than there were three, four, or five years ago. A number of early retirement packages are being negotiated that will result in savings, and some of those positions are not going to be replaced. Of those that are, they will normally be replaced by newer entry level employees at a lower salary that will not have the accrued benefits and may have additional responsibilities from reorganizations. This will be saving money, though there is a hidden cost in experience.

I believe that the answer to difficult times is creativity, flexibility, and hard work - the proverbial "doing more with less". And reducing spending (which the city has). And holding tax increases down (which the city has). And pioneering ways to invest money in technology to cut costs (which the city has)

The answer is NOT to basically insult a group of longstanding employees by assuming that they aren't fully invested in working on the solution and spring it on them in a public setting designed to embarrass. That's not leadership and it's completely ineffective.

Something else to ponder - the city benefits package is good - very good. But there was a reason for every line item in those benefits that have accrued or been negotiated over time. Some can be renegotiated or removed (and they have been as times change). Some are concessions made long ago in different times by different councils to different economic realities. All of those are looked at, renegotiated, and we do our best to find a constructive balance.

Everything has to have a balance. I have not once in my seven year tenure had a citizen come up and ask me to do less for them. I've had people ask to cut an area of the budget they didn't agree with or didn't like, which is then responded to by another citizen (or many) who use that service and absolutely don't want it cut. You need a balance.

Political grandstanding is easy and it's rewarding for the politician. Actually governing is not as easy but it is better for the citizens.

Now I have to go to a meeting to discuss land planning with another entity - the state!