

Subject: City Council Elections 2012 and Council retreat.
Date: Sun, 18 Dec 2011 08:50:45 -0800
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Friends,

Most of you attended our first meeting in November 18, 2011. A few of you have been added since then.

The purpose of the initial meeting was to bring together people who might be interested in running for City Council in November, 2012, people who would like to support them before, during, and after the election, and people who are committed to making Willits an even more wonderful place than it is now.

Our next meeting will be held, Friday, January 20, 2012, 6:30 PM, at the Grange. I hope you'll plan to come and invite others you think would be interested. If you'd like to add them to our mailing list, please send an e-mail to me. Shortly after January 1, 2012, I'll be meeting with a group of you to plan the agenda. If you'd like to help with that, let me know. If you have items you'd like to see us cover at the meeting, let me know.

Here are some of my reflections on the City Council retreat which was held on Tuesday, December 13 and the City Council meeting on Wednesday, December 14th. These are my own reflections. Others there may have had a different take on the proceedings.

Bottom line: Although the Council said they wanted community input, little was done to let the public know about the meeting. Even so, there were 8-10 members of the public who attended. Those who did attend were allowed to listen, watch, and ask questions and make comments throughout the "retreat" which went from 9 AM to 4 PM. I thought it was a very valuable experience and I learned a lot.

Things that stood out for me:

* Ian reading the City of Willits "Mission Statement" and noting that the City could improve on the section of the mission statement that says, "The City also provides a catalyst for the involvement of residents, businesses, and organizations in the development and maintenance of a well-integrated community."

* Paul Cayler's e-mail to me prior to the retreat in response to my Vision Statement of making Willits "the healthiest town in America," he pointed out his view of City priorities as follows:

1. Water
2. Sewer
3. Police
4. Transportation.

I think we all agree that these are priority services, but some of us believe that a City Council, working with an involved citizenry, can do more.

* Ron Orenstein suggested that if the Citizen's want to have additional programs and they can find ways of paying for them, the City should be supportive of those efforts. Bruce Burton replied, "That's socialism."

* There was discussion about treating the public with respect, seeing that as "customers," but not much focus on seeing the public as "partners" with the Council.

* There seemed to be general agreement among the Council for support of a parallel street like Railroad avenue to take congestion off Main Street, whether or not the Willits Bypass becomes a reality.

* There seemed to be general agreement that the chances of the Bypass actually being built are less than 50/50.

* I know I'm not the only one who thinks the benefits of a Bypass through the valley are outweighed by the

drawbacks.

The California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) District 1 Website says, "The intention of the bypass is to relieve congestion, reduce delays, and improve safety for interregional traffic. The project limits begin about 0.8 miles south of Haehl Creek Overhead and end about 1.8 miles south of Reynolds Highway, a distance of approximately 5.9 miles...Lack of capacity and congestion has resulted in delay and lengthy traffic queues within the project limits north of the city limit."

I live North of Willits and rarely is there congestion, making me believe that most of the traffic is local or traffic out of the area that wouldn't be alleviated by the Bypass.

* Larry Stranske sharing his experiences visiting Lake Tahoe and staying in a motel where he and his wife could walk outside and connect immediately with beautiful walking trails. He said he hoped Willits might add these kinds of trails, both for locals and those people visiting.

* The City Council will be meeting in 90 days or so to go over the budget for the coming year. The community is also invited to offer inputs. It seems to me this would be another great opportunity for interested Willits citizens to be heard. I hope the meeting will be publicized and lots of people will attend.

* City Council meeting on December 14th to discuss the West Commercial improvements. There seemed to be overwhelming support for the changes that make it safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Many community people offered to take responsibility for the planters and flowers so that the City wouldn't have added expenses.

This seemed to be to be a wonderful opportunity for the mayor, Bruce Burton, to recognize all the efforts being made by the public to work with the City in partnership. Instead, he said he didn't believe the City should be involved with the public on this issue. "We'll leave it to you and if the plants die we'll just cart away the planters."

I agree with April Tweddell who said, "It would be SO WONDERFUL to have council members who have a vision for Willits and are responsive to the public."

See you soon.

Jed

P.S. "Never think that a small group of committed people can't change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead.

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