A Word From Our Mayor

Mayor David Dunfield

We managed to put together a budget that protects employee salaries and benefits while limiting the mill levy increase to substantially less than the combined effect of reduced state support and increased health care costs. This was a well-intentioned effort, but not one that was not feasible for several reasons. Some were technical: the school district’s fiscal year and the city’s are 6 months apart, and the various regulatory and accounting requirements for the two bodies are quite different. The idea also raised great many policy questions that have the potential to create new problems rather than solve the ones we know. And most critically, the magnitude of the city’s own budget problems made it essential that we take care of city employees and services first.

It is in this area that I feel most satisfied with the actions the current Commission has taken. We managed to put together a budget that protects employee salaries and benefits while limiting the mill levy increase to substantially less than the combined effect of reduced state support and increased health care costs. It is a budget that succeeds in being “lean without being mean,” to borrow a phrase from a recent City Commission goal setting session.

A more recent highlight has been the work toward a “living wage” policy that would apply to employees of companies that receive tax abatements. The heartening part of this issue has been the collaborative spirit that has been demonstrated among those with differing viewpoints on it. Both Living Wage Alliance advocates and Chamber of Commerce leaders have put forth creative, thoughtful proposals. Just as important, they have been willing to consider the proposals made by “the other side” and have responded fairly and flexibly, without rancor or exaggerated rhetoric. I have high hopes that this process can serve as a model for future discussions of important policy issues. Although the final language has not been adopted as of the time of writing, I feel sure that we will end up with a document that is supportive of both businesses and their workers, one that works for the whole community.

On the other hand, there’s Sixth and Wakarusa. But enough of that....

Under our current economic conditions, major new programs involving spending new dollars are not in the cards. But slow economic times provide an opportunity to plan and prepare for the better times to come. The Commission and staff are working on several projects that should bring benefits over the long term. Between now and the early months of next year, the long-awaited draft of new zoning and subdivision regulations will be tested, presented to the public, and refined. Once adopted, they will represent the first comprehensive revision since 1966. Over the decades, the codes have been amended and revised enough times that they have become a patchwork. The new codes will not only be a more consistent and comprehensive whole, but they will also reflect contemporary ideas about how to build a city like Lawrence. For example, the current code indicates that the patterns that make up our historic neighborhoods are wrong, that all new houses ought to be built like suburban homes, wherever they are located. The new code will provide more flexibility in housing types, and

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Summer construction season brings improvements

Projects benefit park users, downtown and the airport

Dry weather and warm temperatures are typical signs of our summer. Those are the same elements that allow construction projects to flourish and create improvements for the Lawrence community. Highlights from the 2003 summer projects include:

Runway extension project at the Lawrence Municipal Airport

Designed to improve the airport’s ability to provide service to larger jets and increased general aviation traffic to Lawrence, 300 feet have been added to the north and 400 feet to the south ends of the main runway at the airport. The project has been funded 99 percent by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Related to the runway extension project, a wetlands mitigation project has recently been completed north of the Kansas River Water Treatment Plant. This 6-plus acre project was required because the runway extension project impacted existing wetlands at the airport. Stormwater improvements, grading changes and introduction of grasses and plants conducive to wetlands that will attract waterfowl and other wildlife were made to the site.

And finally, a 20-unit hanger project is complete at the airport and staff is renting the units. Currently, more than 50 percent of the units are leased.

Storm water management completes capital improvement project

Work was completed on 21st Street west of Naismith Drive where an underground concrete box system was installed to relieve flooding in the neighborhood.

A similar approach is underway on a project running down 21st Street from Kentucky to Barker Avenue.

Parks and Recreation projects aim to continuously enhance and improve facilities and perform required maintenance on facilities.

In June, a new bridge was installed in Brook Creek Park, 1300 Brook Street, to provide pedestrian access over the creek. A Community Development Block Grant received by Brook Creek Neighborhood Association funded the bridge. The neighborhood association took the lead in securing funding for park improvements while the Parks and Recreation Department provided construction supervision and the oversight that keeps improvements consistent with department standards.

The use of CDBG funding by neighborhoods to improve park assets carried over to Clinton Park, 500 W. 5th Street. The Pinckley Neighborhood Association secured CDBG funding for a master plan of the Clinton Park and work is underway to map out future uses and improvements for the park.

Summer construction season brings improvements (continued on back)

Lawrence Police Officers on Downtown Bike Patrol

Community policing effort maximizes citizen interaction

Used when adequate manpower exists to staff all normal districts, bike patrol is one of Lawrence Police Department’s community policing efforts that provides citizens an opportunity to interact with police officers. Bicycle patrol is one of the department’s most popular and engaging activities particularly in the parks and with kids.

Lawrence Police Officers Charles Stewart, left, and Jay Biale, right, were on bike patrol in Downtown Lawrence this summer.
Educating motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians about sharing the road is a top priority in Lawrence.

**RULES & TIPS**

**MOTORIST**

1. Allow at least three feet of passing space between you and a bicycle.
2. Don’t blast your horn when approaching a cyclist—you will startle him/her.
3. Children on bicycles and on foot are often unpredictable in their actions. Expect the unexpected.

**PEDESTRIAN**

1. Always look both ways before crossing the street.
2. Cross at intersections and at crosswalks with the traffic.
3. Walk against traffic if you must walk in the street.

**BICYCLIST**

1. Follow the rules of the road and obey all traffic laws.
   - Don’t run red lights or stop signs.
   - Don’t ride at night without lights.
   - Don’t ride on the sidewalk.
   - Don’t ride more than two abreast.
2. Always ride with the flow of traffic. Motorists aren’t looking for bicyclists on the opposite side of the road.
3. Do not ride with headphones. You cannot hear traffic, trains or other warnings from cyclists.
4. Be smart. Always wear a proper fitting helmet in good condition.

**The Most Important Rule of the Road**

Always keep your cool. Even if you are wronged, remain courteous and remember that you are a role model.

Website offers Utility billing customers new feature

Online information is available 24/7

Customer access to water, sewer, storm water and sanitation account information online arrived in June. Utility bills via a unique personal identification number.

Customers are able to review the date, amount and types of past payments; review daily usage and total usage by numbers and graphs; review past billing dates, due dates, balances and charges, all the same information that is contained on each individual bill during the life of an account. A payment processor is also available to make payments.

“Viewing your account information online will greatly assist utility customers when doing business with the City.

Online access supplements the current ability for customers to initiate, transfer or terminate service by email. A future goal is to eliminate mailing the utility bill to those customers capable of reviewing it over the internet. Your comments and suggestions for future improvements will be appreciated,” explains Joe Yager, financial management analyst with the City of Lawrence Finance Department.

To access the feature, visit http://www.lawrenceutilitybilling.org and select Utility Billing On-Line. Then enter the account number as shown on your utility bill and the PIN. If you don’t have your PIN from your June bill, email UtilityBilling@city.lawrence.kan.us or call 832-7178.

www.lawrenceutilitybilling.org provides customers access to detailed information about their Lawrence Utility accounts.
Improvements (cont. from p.2)

roller hockey court, serving the growing use of inline skates. In the last two years, popularity of the courts has waned and use has declined. Seeing the use slip, Parks and Recreation identified the opportunity to create a basketball court in Brook Creek Park. By resurfacing the courts, adding new goals and removing the old fence, park visitors can now play basketball on a fully lighted court.

An example of ongoing maintenance performed by the Parks and Recreation Department is restoration work on the Union Pacific Depot, 402 N. 2nd Street. A contractor experienced in restoration completed work to replace grout in between the stones. A victim of weather as well as constant movement caused by nearby trains, the Depot requires attention to remain in good shape.

Following a long-term replacement plan, drinking fountains in Downtown were replaced. The plan is to replace three or four fountains per year until all of the fountains in the Downtown area have been modernized. Three to four years will be necessary to complete this plan and is dependent on available funding.

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will recognize the value of protecting historic patterns. Similarly, our building codes are undergoing a significant transformation. The Uniform Building Code, which Lawrence has used for decades, is no longer being updated. Instead, the three major model building codes that competed with one another in the past have been combined into a single International Building Code. But the National Fire Protection Association has produced a building code of its own, for the first time. Deciding which new code to adopt will be a major decision for our Neighborhood Resources Department and City Commission. To this end, Neighborhood Resources has established a Code Review Committee and a series of presentations and meetings to evaluate the code options. Public input is also being sought as part of the Committee’s effort.

A task-force is getting under way to study the mechanisms we use to plan and provide for public improvements in newly developing areas of the city. The language — “adequate public facilities,” “concurrency,” “plat excise tax,” etc. — is pretty bureaucratic, if not downright sleep-inducing. But the results should help the city guide growth so that our services keep up with needs while keeping the costs of those services reasonable. And it should help us assure that the costs associated with new development are being fairly distributed among those who benefit from it.

We also have a task force studying the needs of our homeless population, and the alternative programs and services available to meet them. They are studying what is being done in other cities, what services are available (and lacking) here in Lawrence, and how our city can craft a comprehensive approach. It’s a daunting task, and my thanks go to Vice-Mayor Mike Rundle for his leadership of this important group.

Other efforts are under way or under discussion that will shape the city’s future direction. A task force on public smoking will report to the Commission on the balance between public health and personal choice. Affordable housing issues continue to come forward, and several different efforts have been proposed to study them. The city’s need to expand availability of industrial land will continue to generate interest and proposals.

I believe it was in last year’s goal setting session that somebody came up with the term “planfulness” to describe the overarching direction of the Commission’s goals. I think it’s as good a word as any to describe the direction of the Commission today. We’re going to approach the remainder of this mayor’s term with planfulness, in the expectation of future rewards.

David M. Duanefield
Mayor