

Well, the City of Milton has received a lot of attention this month, something we're not all that used to, starting with a visit from Santa! On December 5, East Pierce Fire and our own Milton Police Department escorted Santa's sleigh through the city, making sure everybody knew of his arrival for our annual Tree Lighting event. After spending the afternoon doing crafts in the chambers, the children were all waiting at City Hall for Santa to throw the switch and light up all the trees – it was quite a sight. We finished the night with great musical entertainment. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make this a wonderful event.

After all the festivities, it was back to work for Council, City staff and me – we had to finish the budget. The budget is quite an interesting process. Since it is a planning document, we have to give it our "best guess." First, we estimate what our revenues will be based on what they have been in the past; then we turn around and do the same thing for expenses. And when all is said and done, it really is our "best guess." Then the real work begins – for the next 12 months, month by month, the budget has to be watched. If things change from what we originally thought would happen, we will have to make adjustments, and sometimes amend the budget or change our plans.

We've also been getting lots of attention from the media and our community at large. All of a sudden everybody is very interested in our 9/11 Memorial. This started as a dream of 9/11 Memorial Committee Chairman Jack Chandler. His dream turned into a plan, and Council and I agreed that it was a good plan. As time went on, some adjustments to that plan had to be made. Although the 9/11 Committee submitted a request for a 14-16' section, word arrived that they could accept a 36' section or go back on the waiting list. So, even at the longer length, we still thought it was a good plan. As time continued to march on, turns out not everybody thought the planned location would be a good fit, and it might be necessary to consider some adjustments. In government, whether we're talking about a budget or a park or an agreement between cities, the process is the same - plans have to be made, the community has to be involved, and ultimately everyone has to be flexible. When all these things come together, really great stuff tends to happen. I believe this is much more than a 36' piece of steel. This is an opportunity – an opportunity to teach our future generations how we felt on that day and since that day. How we as a nation and a community responded on 9/11, and how we continue to respond as the years go by. We need to tell the story.

So, moving forward, here are the facts: Council received a 9/11 Memorial presentation and gave its consent apply for a piece of the World Trade Center. Council has taken no formal action to date. And because we are talking about a city-owned park (Milton Community Park), it has been referred to the Park Board for recommendations on design and location, hopefully with the help of professional architects and structural engineers. The Park Board's recommendations, together with the advice of City staff, will then be presented to Council, first at a study session, and then at a regular council meeting, where the public will be invited and encouraged to contribute. Only after all of these steps will Council take formal action. Then, depending on Council direction, this project can move forward. And even after all these steps, adjustments may be necessary, as is so often the case with projects, especially big projects like this.

As we close up 2015 and look back on how well our plans for this year played out, I want to extend a personal Thank You to all our planners - the Events Committee, the Park Board, the

Planning Commission, and many others who volunteer their time to the City. Thank you, also, to City Council, who give so much of themselves to ensure that Milton stays the great City that we all love so much. We have had some great things happen in the City of Milton that would not have happened without City Council and ALL the great volunteers who sit in the hot seats and take their “best guess” for our future.

Merry Christmas to everyone, and make your own “best guess” plans for a Happy New Year.