

Fall is definitely here! I can't really say that I'm ready for summer to be over, but I am ready to start all the new things that fall brings with it. In the City, fall means Budget Season. But before we get into that, I'd like to reflect on this year so far – this helps us to see how well we have accomplished our goals set out before us in January and how well we have stayed within the parameters of last year's budget.

- On a good note from the budget perspective, revenue did not stay within those parameters – it was actually higher. Not by a lot, but every little bit counts. This allowed City Council to move forward with some extra things that the City needed.
- Council experienced heartbreak again this year – I still can't believe that Lois is no longer with us. She completely understood the budget, as did Bart. But time has a way of marching on, and fall reminds us of that.
- So, in September, Council advertised for interested citizens to fill Position 1, and we received many great applications. A big Thank You to everyone who applied – it's not easy to be interviewed in a public arena, but you all did a great job, and I hope to see more of you. In the end, one person stood out from the rest. Tom Boyle has been volunteering for years, on the Planning Commission as well as the Event Committee, and he has been a very familiar face in the Council Chamber audience. This proved to be a very important point, as he was up-to-date on all the issues and able to answer current questions. Tom, you did an excellent job, and I look forward to working with you – Congratulations.
- Much appreciation to Leonard Sanderson and Jim Heddlesten, who offered to step in to the vacant Council position to lend their considerable knowledge and experience of the budget at this crucial time.
- The City has hired a new Community and Economic Development Director. Michael Morales comes highly recommended and with a great depth of knowledge of our area. He was introduced to Council on his first day, which coincided with this year's Council Retreat.
- September is later than we usually schedule a Retreat, but frankly, we've just been too busy. The Meridian at Stone Creek very graciously welcomed us to their main building and we felt as if we were at a five-star hotel! I want to give a big Thank You to Tommy Tomlinson and her staff. Everything was beautiful. City department directors presented to Council the many things that have been done this year, what is yet to come, and future goals. I kind of felt like we were speed-dating – so much information in such a small amount of time! But we had a timekeeper, and we stuck to it. Council ended the night with what they would like to see in the next budget. I appreciate the hard work that Council and staff have done this year.

So, it is time to begin planning for 2017. As we move on, there is one thing you will start to hear a lot about this year – Parks. Normally, you might not think of parks in the fall, but this is our planning time. We will begin our Parks Comprehensive Plan; this is very much like the City's Visioning Plan we went through a few years back, with more detailed emphasis on Parks. With limited financial resources, this is the way a city can qualify for grant and REET (real estate excise tax) funding. Also concerning Parks, the 911 Memorial conversations continue, along with media interest. It is important to note that the 911 Memorial Committee is not a City committee. Eventually, this conversation will move onto Council's agenda. Another conversation

involving Parks is the possible renaming of the lower ball field in memory of Carson Styron. At the last City Council meeting, Council asked that the discussion be added to the Park Board's agenda. The Park Board is a City committee, and they will make a recommendation to Council after studying the matter. This is the City's process for anything concerning our parks, and it is why these committee positions are so important. After the Park Board has studied and made its recommendation, the topic will come to Council for further discussion and decision.

Speaking of a lot of planning, the Event Committee has planned a wonderful October Craft Bazaar. Friday night there will be music and food in the parking lot and plenty of fun for everyone. Of course I am looking forward to doing Pumpkin Painting with the Mayor! I truly love all your kids and grandkids – after all, this is who we truly plan for.