

..... From the Mayor

May 4, 2012

Serving currently as your mayor, and previously as a councilman for twelve years , I am often reminded how important it is to make sure everyone has a voice, no matter what the issue. It is a basic tenant of democracy. I have heard comments there is perception that some issues are decided behind closed doors, ignoring public input. That perception could be partially attributed to the bitter partisanship at the federal and state level that far too often seems to paralyze the decision-making process. Many constituents are understandably fed up with the process.

City councilman and government teacher Mr. Jeff Grose and I have discussed this specific issue on more than one occasion. We agree that the fundamental principle of a representative form of government is that those who are elected by the people have a responsibility to make decisions for the people. If that weren't the case, we would have referendum voting on everything from resolutions recognizing National Little League Week to the approval of specific budget line items.

I am fortunate to have a very engaged Council that understands the need to be informed and represent. They have been elected to make those decisions. While they should be accessible and responsive to the needs of their constituents, they are also entrusted to make necessary decisions at the Council level. For the most part, Council members do a remarkable job of gathering information to have accurate facts and examine both sides of an issue.

For example, when deciding to appropriate dollars for a specific project, one must balance revenue as a function of spending, the pros and cons of public input at a hearing, the short- and long-term welfare of the City, street talk, and news-media reporting, along with personal experience and observation. A responsive Council member will filter the "input" and use it to shape and eventually define his or her public stance on a certain issue. A majority consensus is then built as the result of debate and informed decision-making. While we may not always agree, there is no one person behind closed doors, and no good ol' boys "calling the shots."

MY POINT IS THIS! In the fourteen years I have served the residents of Warsaw, I am convinced that people really care! I know this because they attend public meetings, they vote, they call the mayor's office when they aren't happy, they volunteer, and they understand the importance of engaging and communicating their needs and concerns, all while respecting their neighbor's right to do the same.

The only time I have not been able to freely speak to a specific concern is when state statutes meant to protect public employees or the competitive bidding process dictated "no comment." The notion that issues are suppressed has more to do with the fact that oftentimes very few people show up at public meetings to express their views.

Some important meetings will be scheduled in the next few months. Those dates will be posted on the city website (Warsaw.in.gov) and will include at least two public input forums to evaluate downtown parking issues, several public hearings to change the current sign ordinance, and meetings regarding bike and pedestrian trail master planning.

Public input from engaged citizens is an essential element of decision-making for elected representatives. Hope to see you soon at City Hall.