

I have appreciated the opportunity to communicate with our community in this monthly column. It was the editor's suggestion to create "from the Mayor" to present issues and ideas from the city perspective. Since I started 18 months ago, I have had many comments from readers who appreciate hearing what is on my mind.

The examination of both sides of the issue is better served when open dialogue is promoted. That is my intention. I have worked hard to eliminate the notion that decisions are made behind closed doors with a group of "good old boys." My goal for "from the Mayor ..." is simply to share my vision as your mayor. I don't expect that everyone will agree with me (my ever-vigilant council members often remind me of that!). In fact, I try to stimulate discussion and welcome "unfiltered feedback."

As a councilman of twelve years before being elected as Mayor, I felt that becoming familiar with both sides of an issue was the responsible way to arrive at a conclusion resulting in the right decision. This was accomplished through discussion with constituents, researching like issues in similar communities, and searching media sources for information. Internet communication has advanced the quantity of information available to the point of saturation.

Everyone must distill all of the information into an informed decision. Then, developing consensus with the rest of the council requires exchanging differing perspectives collectively and shaping a final decision with compromise while adhering to principle. In the end, I would like to think we got it right for the benefit of the majority of our community. I would be the first to admit, however, that even if you get it right, if you don't communicate properly, you fail.

Last July, I discussed the sign ordinance in this column. After multiple very active, productive town hall meetings, the issues were addressed and the city has a new sign ordinance that meets community standards. Just this week, after a large amount of public input and almost a year's worth of consideration, the council presented ordinance changes meant to improve patron, merchant and resident parking issues in our downtown.

In a few weeks, the group from Ball State will be back in town to present results from the community visioning exercise "Imagine Warsaw." The lead architect has been involved in these type of projects for over 20 years and informed me that they typically interview 25 to 30 citizens during these "charrettes," but in Warsaw last month his students interviewed over 200 members from our community! I'd like to think that the open engagement of our city council, department heads, and elected officials has encouraged public participation in these and many other instances as we move forward.

I will continue to promote open communication and transparency within city government in an effort to encourage your valued opinions. All I ask in return is that when you weigh in on an issue, consider the benefits and consequences to the entire community. That is transparency.