

From the Mayor...

September 1, 2017

I think this is a good time to review for our taxpayers, some important information about how your elected officials and city employees work diligently for you. Lately, a local blog has “reported” baseless allegations of impropriety of our bidding process, ludicrous accusations of erasing tapes (there are no tapes), and public access complaints for documents that are statutorily protected (anonymous donations and draft engineering reports). These “news stories” have been perpetuated on social media and are simply self-serving, politically motivated “fake news”. Given there is no editorial control of these digital posts, it is easy to understand how simple it is for a disgruntled individual to attack with negativity while those of us entrusted to run our city, work overtime to improve our community.

We will let the progress of our community speak for itself. It is no accident that Warsaw continues to grow and progress. Warsaw’s steady population growth since the 2010 census (over 8%) is a critical indicator of prosperity and success, the result of planning and hard work by all of our elected officials and community partners. We are one of only three counties in Indiana where employee compensation exceeds the national average. Our unemployment rate is low. Our downtown is vibrant. Our retail offerings easily exceed other cities of our size in Indiana.

Do we make mistakes? Of course we do. We are all human. We acknowledge our mistakes, correct them, and move on. I would bet our detractors have made a few mistakes in their lives.

Let me also assure you that our administration is subject to all of the local and state rules, ordinances, and statutes that govern all purchasing decisions. Public works projects, materials and supplies, contracted services, professional services, local preference, land disposition and acquisition are all statutorily controlled. The regulations and oversight for public procurement are different than from the private sector.

Smaller purchase and project limits are established by local ordinance (locally \$50,000). Municipalities can act as a general contractor for those smaller projects. We are allowed to purchase materials directly. We can select qualified, local (whenever possible) contractors that are able to meet our timelines with no requisite bidding. We can even perform work we are qualified to do ourselves. The Indiana legislature established those procedures to give cities the ability to, above all, control costs and save money. They also provide flexibility for small projects, and facilitate day-to-day operations and emergency repairs.

Allegations of impropriety of a recent small project reflected a lack of knowledge of statutory provisions and local ordinances that control that process. The allegations were an attempt to discredit a highly successful project funded completely by the vote of community donations and a large grant from the State of Indiana.

Larger projects have their own unique requirements. They generally require professional engineering to create plans and specifications that will insure a fair bidding process. The city is allowed to select those professionals based upon their past performance or historical familiarity with city infrastructure. The construction of those projects are subject to sealed bids in accordance with Indiana Code.

Our city engineer has a lengthy history of compliance with state bidding processes. Our department heads utilize his expertise on a regular basis to insure fairness and compliance. Our employees work diligently to make sure our projects are well coordinated and follow proper procedure.

Social media is an important platform for the dissemination of information. The city has a website (www.warsaw.in.gov) and Facebook page (Warsaw City Facebook) to get timely accurate information to our citizens. As a taxpayer, you have a right to accurate information. Allegations of impropriety made on social media are opinionated and not subject to any editorial process. If you have specific concerns about city business you hear on social media, I would invite you to come to city hall. We will take the time to answer your questions and explain the often-complicated processes that govern the administration of our city.

As a city, we work to create opportunity. We work hard to do what is right for the citizens of our community. We also work to communicate through all forms of media, an effective, accurate message.