City Issues

 Communication

Not long after I was first elected to City Council, I suggested broadcasting the City Council meeting live through Comcast. They were offering the service for free at the time. I was told “the less that the citizens know, the happier they are.”

This did not sit well with me. I believe just the opposite. I believe that the more citizens know, the more invested they will be in our city. With the accessibility of YouTube and Facebook making it so easy to livestream and to see videos I brought up broadcasting city meetings again. I had some push back about the cost of the equipment. However, I had done some research and was able to show that the expense was minimal. The City Council agreed.

Videoing the City Council meetings has been great. However, community members have asked repeatedly for **closed captioning to be turned on** so that for those having a difficult time hearing. With closed captioning they could at least follow along by reading it. This is something that can be done simply and should be done. I would go a step further and **expand videoing** and make committee meetings and informational workshop meetings also available for viewing. There are some meetings scheduled at times when most people in Sherwood cannot go to them. For example, Wastewater Treatment Committee Meetings are at noon and Advertising and Promotion (A & P) Commission meetings at 3pm.

Since communication is so important to me, I pledged during my last campaign to put out a newsletter. I sent out cards to my City Council Ward with information on how to receive this newsletter by email. In the intervening thee and a half-years I have published 19 ***Mary Jo’s Heye-lights*** newsletters. (All but the first are available for reading on my website MaryJo4Sherwood.com under newsletters.

Newsletter readership has grown with every issue and now people throughout the community receive it. In the newsletter I ask for people to let me know how they feel about any given issue, and they have. I truly believe that having this kind of communication has made me able to do a better job as a City Council member. While this has been a lot of work, I truly feel that the citizens deserve this opportunity for information. This is important.

This past summer while visiting a friend in another state, she inquired about how my prospects for seeking the office of Mayor were going. I talked about the success of the newsletter and that if elected, I would want to keep this going. She then said that she needed to show me something. She brought out a copy of her city’s newsletter (Parker, Colorado). It was exactly what I had envisioned. She said that every household in the city receives it once a month and they love it. It was filled with so much helpful information. If elected, I would have a **paper newsletter sent to all homes with the option to opt for an electronic version to save on paper/trees**. Both options would be available for every reading preference.

Here is another idea I would so steal. The Mayor of Bryant, Arkansas has a monthly program called **Coffee with the Mayor**. It takes place on a Saturday morning at different locations around the city. Sometimes they are at a restaurant or community facility and sometimes they are outdoors at a park. This gives the citizens a chance to ask questions, give ideas, or even just get to know their mayor. I love this idea and would implement it.

I have spent time meeting with several of our **local developers and major landowners**. I have found that they would love a **quarterly regularly schedule luncheon** where they can all talk about projects with each other and the mayor in an informal setting. This is also something I would implement.

I think that it would also be good to invite all the **builders** to come together in a similar fashion to keep lines of communication open and find out if there are any systemic problems that need to be improved or rectified.

I would also like to **invite the leader of all the different faith communities that are in or near Sherwood to come together quarterly to also talk about Sherwood and possible needs out in the community that if we worked together, that perhaps we can solve.**

Being involved and present with the Chamber of Commerce not only at ribbon cuttings and luncheon but also board meetings and small group get togethers, I feel is important. **I want the Sherwood’s small businesses to know that I am there to be supportive whenever possible**.

I think it is important to **go to schools and talk, as well as listen, to the students about our community** just as I did recently when invited to Calvary Academy. Why not ask kids about what they would want to see in terms of parks and recreational facilities in the city in which they live?

And finally, I would **open the door to the Mayor’s Office** to provide a more welcoming environment.Whether you are a citizen, business owner, or a representative of a company looking to locate in Sherwood, you should be welcomed. I believe that Sherwood is a safe community, and **I am not afraid of its citizens.** I do not believe that this is how I want to live my life. I hear all too often that calls to the Mayor’s Office are not answered. I believe this must change. I truly enjoy meeting and talking with our citizens. I think it is important to never forget that the mayor works for the citizens and let me make this very clear, *I will be working for you.*  **MJHT**