8/25/2015
71st KZGN News Talking Points Editorial

By: Tom Wiknich

Tonight, I decided I’m going to do something different. How about a group editorial? Tonight I’ll use guest editorials along with my own comments.

Before I provide the topic, a comment from the last editorial titled: Last night Mayor Breeden asked for the people to not only let them know when they are doing something wrong, but please also let them know when they are doing something right. In the editorial I stated the following, “One of the most important things you need to do is to break away from your regular core of friends and contacts for opinions. If you really care about getting the public’s inputs to help make decisions, you need to reach out to people you normally have no opportunity to engage. The internet allows you to do that outreach. Embrace it and use it to communicate with your constituents.” There was an obvious acceptance from Mayor Breeden to offer some discussion on the KZGN Facebook discussion group. She had a pleasant discussion with Ethan. Also over in the IWV discussion group, I see Lori Acton engaging the people there too. As well as I also got a message from her thanking me for the editorial concerning the council voting to keep the police workforce at its current levels. I encourage all the council members to come into the 21st century. Join the Facebook discussion groups. These are people you represent. Reach out to them and offer meaningful discussion of city topics.

Now on to tonight’s editorial. I’m going to do this a little different tonight. People have asked me to offer guest editorials from time to time. Tonight is one of those times. I’m going to run a guest editorial discussion between a KZGN discussion group contributor and Mayor Breeden, and my comments to their discussion. Here’s what they discussed and is today’s topic: Who is to blame for the $750,000 budget error? Ethan started us off with this comment, “It would be refreshing if the city government would hold responsible the staff still employed by the city for the oversight of the surprise deficit of nearly $700,000. The mayor's comments stating that ‘we shouldn't be pointing fingers’ is typical, and I disagree with that type unaccountable governance.”

Mayor Breeden responded, “Taken out of context that was my response Ethan. However, you may or may not have noticed I asked for a full report and discussion by Sept. 15. Finding solutions/options was more important now than placing blame.”

Then Ethan provided this lengthy comment, “Ok, well, we will see Madam Mayor if anything of substance comes from a ‘report’ and ‘discussions’. I may be wrong as to the final outcome on this, but I have a sneaking hunch a computer glitch or an antiquated computer system will be the convenient culprit. According to reports in the media, the offending computer system will not be replaced anytime soon, how interesting.  My apologies Madam Mayor if I sound less than convinced that you and the city council will hold any person responsible for this huge deficit error. My pessimism about this is derived from a lifetime of seeing elected leaders unwilling to hold themselves or their subordinates accountable for misdeeds or incompetence.  If in the end a computer accounting system will be assigned sole blame, please remember somebody had to plug the numbers in, Somebody had to reconcile the results, Somebody had to be ‘ok’ with using the offending computer accounting system. What this means to the average person on the street is that somebody is ultimately responsible for this massive error. In an effort to show I am not a complete antagonist and to give you and the CC the praise you desire, I would both congratulate you and thank you for not laying off police officers.”

In closing, Mayor Breeden did like Ethan’s comments. To this discussion between a citizen and the mayor, I say well done. Thank you, Mayor Breeden, for participating. Whether you agree with what is being said is immaterial. The fact that you read a person’s comments and let him know you read them is fantastic. Often times, the council has a lot more information at their access, than the average person does. What data you use to make a decision includes data that often times we the people don’t see, read or hear. Often times, when observing the council discussion back and forth on the dias, some council members seem to be holding back their comments. They appear to want to say more than they are, but seem to now want to jeopardize a position, or say something they maybe shouldn’t have said. What needs to be said is, when you folks are sitting on the dias and making decisions, be open and transparent with we the people. Let us know what you’re thinking and why! Maybe if we had all the data you have, we might have a better understanding of the item at hand. Would having an informed public be a good thing? A public that understood the topic and how you reached your decision would be good. Don’t lose your patience to inquiries from the public. This kind of gets back to Ethan’s discussion. He has a general lack of confidence of government officials really getting to the bottom of problems. This is a widely held perception. If there is going to be a full reporting on what caused the budget problem, then make sure the public sees the report, and is informed as to want happened. What may be done in the future to try and not let it happen again.

This all gets back to my editorial point. Elected officials should use every opportunity to reach out to and engage their constituents, not shun them or avoid them. My direct comment to the city council, please don’t take this as I’m bashing you. I’m not saying anyone is doing anything wrong, but offering an encouragement for you to do your job a little better. Please take it as a constructive form of encouragement for you to be receptive to the people that elected you.

In conclusion, that was a guest editorial with my opinion thrown in. Thanks Mayor Breeden and Ethan for your discussion.

I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think. I’d like to know what you think. If you have any comments about this editorial, or would like to discuss or recommend a topic, I’d like to hear from you. Please email them to info@kzgn.net.