

June 2017 Column

There's an old saying that gets tossed about by many of us on city council: "We're just one election away from everything going to hell in a hand basket".

To some, this sounds like we are a bit conceited about how great we are, and what a great job we're doing, but it's not that at all.

I think even the most cynical critics out there would say the city's doing pretty well right now. We have an experienced council that responds well to their constituents. We have a competent, professional city staff that's keeps the city running. We have plenty of jobs and resources, and we are on our way to fixing all the old worn-out streets and infrastructure that's been long neglected. New homes can't be built fast enough. I could go on, but I need the space.

But yet - to some of us, including me, doom lies on the horizon, or at least, the perception of doom. I can't speak for all the council members, but I know many of them feel the same way I do. This feeling of doom is deeply seated in that purely human quality called complacency. To be specific, I mean complacency in good, decent hard-working people who love this town and want to see it grow and prosper. The feeling of doom comes about because of the nearly impossible job of convincing any of these decent people to run for office, and replace us.

Many people are not aware of the fact that we have term limits on city council. Council members and the mayor are limited to 2 4-year terms each. (By the way, I'm in favor of term limits) Fresh faces have to be found every 2 to 4 years to fill the vacant slots. Fresh faces and new ideas are a good thing.

Before I ran for city council back in 2006, I was the "King of Complacency". It took time for me to make the decision. As a matter of fact, it took nearly a year. What I went through was similar to the Kübler-Ross 5 stages of grief.

1. Denial – "Oh heck no! Are you kidding me? Run for city council? Are you out of your mind?"
2. Anger – "Why the heck doesn't somebody run against that idiot!...Stop bugging me about running! ...I don't have time to do this!... I should have kept my mouth shut!"
3. Bargaining – "If nobody else runs, maybe I'll run... Maybe I can find somebody else... I don't know...Maybe that guy's not so bad."
4. Depression – "Oh, God, why did I even think about doing this?... I'm scared to death of making a fool of myself... People are going to yell at me and hate me... Do I really want to be a politician?"
5. Acceptance – "OK, I can do this. I love this town, and I know I can make a difference, and I have friends and family to support me."

We will be having a special election in November for a vacant seat in District 3, and another regular election in November 2018 for 4 council seats. If you don't know your district number, you can find it on our city website, or call 401-2445 and give your address. Since this mental acceptance process takes time, I urge everyone to start convincing good people to run, or start thinking about it themselves. We really need good people on council to continue our progress, and like I said above, we're only one election away from doom.

I can tell you that most of the good folks on council went through similar stages I did. These are healthy feelings that good people go through. They have examined their consciences, and have shed their egos, and are ready to serve.

Beware of the candidates (and they are lining up now) that are divisive, self-serving, overly ambitious and think it's their destiny to be in power – Those are the guys that will send us to that hand basket in hell... in just one election.

Gosh, I love this town!