

January 2018 Column

Everyone wants a good credit score, right? If you watch TV for just an hour or so, you will probably see a commercial for an agency such as Credit Karma that tracks credit scores for individuals. Well, the governmental version of Credit Karma, also known as Standard & Poors or S&P, has just upgraded the credit score for the City of Seguin yet again. We have just learned that S&P has improved our bond rating from “AA-” to “AA”. They also changed our outlook from “positive” to “stable”. This adds to the steady streak of ratings improvements we have received over the past few years.

Bond ratings are not the most glamorous or sexy things to talk about, but they are very important in evaluating how well a city is being run. These constantly improving ratings help assure the public that everything is being done on the up-and-up in the City of Seguin. They show that our local economy is consistently improving, and will continue to improve into the foreseeable future. This assessment is also made by a totally independent 3rd party, which takes any local bias out of the equation. Yes, we have been building a lot, and fixing a lot of things lately, but these bond ratings prove that our spending is well within our means.

This is what happens when you have a great city council that recognizes the importance of fiscal responsibility, and works together to make things better for the entire city. Every member of your city council does a great job in representing the best interests of their respective districts, but at the same time keeping in mind the “big picture” for the community as a whole.

This upgraded rating is also largely due to the competence and professionalism of our Director of Finance, Susan Caddell and our City Manager, Doug Faseler. They are the individuals who manage our incredibly complicated budget and finances and make it all make sense.

As I mentioned above, we continue to build things and grow – not only in population, but also in our ability to offer better services to our citizens. Last week, we cut the ribbon on our brand new Utilities Operations Center (UOC) on hwy 123 business, just north of I-10. It contains the headquarters for our electrical, water, and sewer utilities along with our information technology (IT) department. Formerly, the utilities offices behind the events center were crammed into a dark, dusty, dingy warehouse with collapsing ceilings. Very expensive inventory was subject to the dust, rain and temperature, and was difficult to track. Utility poles and transformers sat on the ground in uneven, pot-holed dirt and gravel that made handling these items dangerous and difficult. It was time to move. It also made sense to bring all the utilities together in one place, since the water/sewer director and engineer had also been working in substandard, cramped quarters.

If you haven't noticed, information technology (computer stuff) has become an integral part of any large, complicated institution like cities. It is impossible to run an organization efficiently in today's world without it. It requires constant updating and expansion, and the department had totally outgrown its former home in the three closets it inhabited in the back of the city hall annex. The new IT facilities in the UOC are state of the art, and will serve us for many years into the future.

Was all this expensive? Sure it was. But it is all worth it when you factor in the safety, efficiency and decades of future use that are assured. It also is not affecting your tax rate at all. It is being paid for by utility revenue bonds that are part of your utility rates. This is even more remarkable since we have some of the lowest consumer rates for electric, water and sewer in the area.

Gosh I love this town!