

PERCEPTIONS OF THE MAYOR'S ROLE

April 2017 Bob Jones

We are in the midst of another Mayoral contest within about four months of the last election for mayor of our city. It's probably easier to just say circumstances dictated the necessity of such a thing. But really, this isn't the point of the issue at all. The reality is that last time there were, unusually, too few choices and this time, as usual, there are too many!

Eight candidates made this ballot and for a time it appeared to be two other persons in, then out. (But that is another story.)

Why would eight people seek the office? What do they suppose gives them a chance to seriously be considered as a suitable individual to occupy the top seat in city government. Is it ego? There definitely has to be some of that. Is it wishful thinking or you know the terminology "a pipe dream?" Is it the belief that the job is indeed ceremonial which is to say superficial? You know, with a City Manager who really runs everything. (Wink-Wink)

Some say the Mayor is merely one of nine votes on the council. Others see it as the literal Face of the City. The visible up front spokesperson for our citizens and its government. Still, there is a perception that the Mayor undoubtedly is the tool of the wealthy elite, the movers and shakers of the business/developer/banking consortium with long standing family and community ties.

The Mayor does decide what goes on the agenda that comes before the council for discussion, debate and/or passage. The Mayor as a rule must have the financial backing of the wealthy as well as a significant degree of support from a majority of special interest groups around the town. Every one of them have their own reasons for backing and helping a candidate win with the requisite promises from said candidate to pay attention to their specific wants and needs. Be it future contract considerations by municipal unions such as police and fire, regulations or deregulations affecting bottom line costs, or expansions of parks for environmentalist. They all have a price for their support.

How well an actual mayor does is based more on their personal knowledge of the "players" and their knowledge of the "system" (how government really works), their interpersonal relationship skills (ability to get along with and persuade other council members to go along), and their tactical skill in effectively insuring that while no one gets everything, everyone gets something. At least enough something that satisfies their support for you.

Not to mention the actual time it takes to effectuate all of the variables or in plain language "do the job." It would appear to not at all be a part time position, but then again it is truly part-time pay.

As we look at the current crop of those seeking this office, be sure that whether you decide to vote or not to vote, you still need to, at the very least, pray that the best candidate wins.

OUR future depends on it.