

TO: Mayor and Board of Aldermen
FROM: Lee Galloway, Town Manager
DATE: January 11, 2009
SUBJECT: Thoughts on 2009 and the Decade Just Past

As we reached the end of 2009, a number of stories appeared in the news media and on the internet reflecting on the past year. There were also a number of stories that reflected on the happenings of this, the first decade of the 21st century. Most seemed to focus on the negatives or the bad news, but I would prefer to think about the positives or good news. With some extra days off, I spent a bit of time thinking about the past year and then in comparing what we find on December 31, 2009 compared to the way it was at the end of December, 1999. It reminded me of the old Virginia Slims cigarette commercials, for those who remember that slogan - ‘You’ve Come A Long Way Baby’.

When I look at this organization, I see the many physical improvements that have been made to the Town’s facilities. As the decade began, the Town opened the new Recreation Center, a facility that had been planned and sought after for more than 30 years. What a fine addition it was to the recreation programs for the Town, and the citizens have certainly shown their appreciation for the facility by their attendance and support for a variety of programming.

I think about how often I watched a fire truck trying to leave Station No. 1 at 9 South Main Street, only to be blocked by the gridlock on Main Street. And then I see the fine new, award winning facility located at 1022 North Main Street, with plenty of room for trucks and equipment, with pull through bays and ease of access to the Downtown, the Russ Avenue Commercial area and points on the east of Town. There is sufficient space for administrative functions, training activities and comfortable living arrangements for fire personnel. The level of service to the public has been enhanced with this addition.



Each morning, I look across the street at the outstanding new building that has sprung up to provide adequate space and suitable working conditions for our Police Department and those who work in various areas of community development. The public may now visit one spot to handle Engineering, Planning, Land Use, Inspections and Code Enforcement issues. There is a “state of the art” meeting space for the Town Board and all other Boards and Commissions, and space is provided for the Downtown Waynesville Association. What an attractive addition this has been to the Central Business District.

At Public Works, an investment has been made in constructing new equipment storage sheds to better protect the expensive equipment used in the provision of public services. The fueling area has been moved away from the building and a system of tracking fuel consumption of every vehicle has been implemented. Attractive gates have been installed and more are planned as we try to improve the overall appearance of this facility purchased in the late 1980s. Efforts have been made to improve the energy efficiency of this facility, but more is needed.

At the Water Plant, extensive improvements have been made to the building that was constructed in 1953-54 and expanded in the 60s. Energy efficiency measures were added in the early part of the decade, and in 2007-2008, construction took place to add a large area to the plant lab, to provide space for offices and records storage and a suitable lounge area for personnel. As the lab addition was done, the need for a new roof was discovered, and that was completed in 2009. A facility with



the capacity to produce 8 million gallons of finished water daily is producing slightly less than half that on the average, and it is backed by a reservoir and watershed which could supply 12 million gallons of water to the plant each day.

At the Wastewater Treatment Plant, work has been done to modernize facilities and to make expensive repairs to the equipment that was installed in the late 1970s when much of the facility was constructed or last renovated. The process has changed over the years, going from one in which the sludge was buried to one of 'lime stabilization' where lime is mixed into the sludge and then it is applied to farm land in our county. An expensive and high maintenance pumping system was replaced with a pumping system that has required much less time and cost to operate.

No discussion of Town facilities would be complete without addressing the utility systems. There have been extensive improvements to the Water Treatment and Distribution System, the Sewer Treatment and Collection System and the Electrical System. The amount of money that has been invested in water tanks and in upgrades and rehabilitation to the wastewater plant and in the electrical system improvements has been enormous. The Board has committed a much greater amount of money, \$275,000 in both the Water and Sewer Funds every year, to address line replacement and system improvements. A new 750,000 gallon water tank was constructed on Little Cove Road to assure adequate time for the water to be in contact with chlorine prior to entering the distribution system. We constructed a 300,000 gallon backwash tank that sits on the west side of the dam. With this tank, the plant may pump water by diesel engine to the tank as often as needed, and then use the water, through the pressure from gravity flow, to backwash the filters in the water basins.

We also constructed a new 2 million gallon tank at the end of Reservoir Drive, replacing a 1925 era tank with a 1 million gallon capacity. There were other tanks constructed or enlarged during the decade - Third Phase of Laurel Ridge-160,000 gallons; Fourth Phase of Laurel Ridge - 160,000; Woody Lane - 100,000, Pinnacle Point - 10,000; Barbers Orchard 1: 100,000, Barbers Orchard 2: 10,000 and currently have Eagle Nest under construction with two tanks, one with 81,000 gallons, shown to the right, and the other with 28,000 gallons at the top of the mountain.



Primarily as a result of 2002 study on the electric system, extensive improvements were made to the system over the decade. It was noted that the Town needed to do a better job replacing utility poles, and we have attempted to maintain a plan of replacing 90 poles annually. In addition, the 2002 study made an assessment of our electrical needs



over a 20 year period, and projected that as Associated Packaging grew, our 20 megawatt substation would be unable to meet the future demands. So efforts began to secure a site and construct a second substation, and this 15 megawatt facility went into operation in May, 2009. How timely that was in view of the heavy demand experienced at the end of December, 2009, particularly when combined with the damages that occurred to the older substation during the snow on December 18.

Outside of facilities and infrastructure, I think of equipment and the changes made in operating procedures in the past decade. There are few areas in which we have changed more than in solid waste. We switched commercial garbage collections from two-man, side loading trucks, emptying 2, 3 or 4 yard dumpsters to a one-man front loading truck, emptying 4, 6 and 8 yard dumpsters. We stopped selling dumpsters and now own the dumpsters and rent them to customers. We now use a GIS system to assist in collecting solid wastes from residential areas, and continue to experiment with other uses for the GIS system. We changed from burying brush and limbs to a system where we bring in a tub grinder as needed to chop the debris into mulch and then sell that mulch to citizens. And in the process, we implemented a much improved operation of our yard waste landfill behind Garrett-Hillcrest Cemetery.

The Mayor and Aldermen have been generous in providing the funds to allow so many changes to occur. When we approached the Board with needs, you have been responsive in providing funds for new buildings, renovations to facilities, new and replacement equipment. And while the Town's debt level is much higher than it has been in the past, we now have the facilities and equipment needed to do our work more effectively and in a more professional manner. In doing so, you have provided the funds needed so that the citizens of this community and those receiving services the Town delivers, have benefitted significantly.

The Board has always insisted upon good planning, and that played a major role in the positive situation in which Waynesville finds itself compared to other governmental units. In looking back over the decade, I recall the first Land Development Study, 2000-2003, which led to our Land Development Standards. Now we are involved in revisiting that document in 2009-2010. There was the Study of our Electric System in 2002. There were studies of personnel - a pay and classification study in 2003 and a staffing study in 2004. There was a study of Town facilities in 2004-2005 which led to the construction of a new fire station and the renovation and construction of the police station/development office/town hall. In 2005-2006, there was an Asset Management Plan for the Water and Sewer System. Through good planning, we have made better use of the dollars that the Board allocates and that the community provides. As elected officials, management and personnel, I believe we have been good stewards of the funds with which we have been entrusted. And I believe the public has seen the positive results of that stewardship.

There are many other items that I could mention and which are certainly important in terms of the positive events of the past decade. I think about the amount of time, funds and research invested in securing the privately held lands in the watershed, in placing those 8,000 acres under conservation easements, and in the development of the Watershed Stewardship Plan. I think about the time, funds and work that went into the creation and development of the Public Art Commission and the many new and interesting features that are being added to our community under the oversight of that group. I think about the time, funds and work invested in the development of the Waynesville Greenway connecting Lake Junaluska to the Vance Street Park, with the persistence in extending that last leg along Howell Mill Road when that project is constructed.

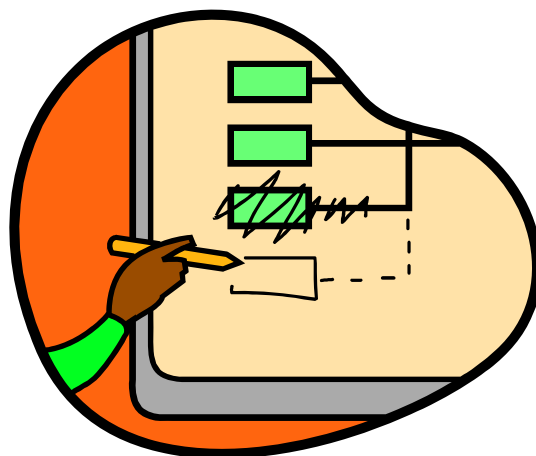


I think about the partnerships that evolved during the decade and the importance of working together with governmental and private groups. I look at the Justice Center and the parking deck to which the Town contributed \$2.5 million for the use of the County and for citizens accessing the downtown for shopping and commerce. I see cooperative efforts on utilities - accepting the wastewater discharge from the Town of Clyde for treatment at our wastewater plant, cooperating with Haywood County on the extension of water lines to serve Barbers Orchard, working with Eagle Nest Homeowners' Association to extend water service to that residential development and connecting to the Maggie Valley Sanitary District to provide water to their system in drought situations. I think of how Waynesville reached out to our neighboring municipalities and to Progress Energy in the floods of 2004, knowing that if we were in need of help, they would be ready to assist us.

We are in a period in which we all agree that it is a good time to step back and catch our breath. But that is not to say that we should not be thinking about what still needs to be done with the Town's facilities, with the equipment, with the procedures and with our operations and personnel. We have facilities that still need to be addressed in terms of renovations and rehabilitation. We need to look at the facilities we have and the equipment we use to see if we can be more efficient in our operations while still delivering the same level of services to which our customers are accustomed.

Our nation has been in a recession. While some say it is ending, in North Carolina, Haywood County and Waynesville, it seems that the start of the recovery has been very slow. We are entering the season when budget preparation for 2010-2011 begins, and I am concerned that the task may be even more difficult than 2009-2010. Our revenue picture is not what we had hoped for, particularly in the area of sales taxes, and I am deeply concerned about what actions the State will take to deal with their revenue shortfall.

In early 2009, I heard a speaker comment on the recession and the effect it should have on how we run our organizations. "Don't waste a good crisis", he said, and I think he was exactly right. It is a great time for us to lay all the possibilities on the table, to consider every segment of our operation, to determine if we can make changes that will result in cost savings to our customers. One of my favorite sayings is 'If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got'. If we feel that we need to achieve different results than we have in the past, then we need to approach things in a different manner. The economic crisis we have experienced the past 18 months gives us the opportunity to make the changes that need to be made to recreate an organization that is leaner and more efficient while still being equally responsive to the needs of the public. If there are dramatic changes that need to be made, there may be no better time than now to sell the public on the need for these changes and to seek their support for those changes. Some of the changes may require sacrifices and accepting change for all of us - elected officials, management, department heads, employees and the citizens as well.



To all of this I must add the following. As I look back over the past year and the past decade, I never fail to realize or to continually note that the greatest asset of this organization is our personnel. Any city or county or private organization may have the finest facilities, the most modern of equipment and all the money and resources possible. But a great organization needs personnel who will conduct business in an efficient and professional manner, who will operate equipment properly and safely and who will care for those facilities and equipment with respect and appreciation. In addition, great organizations have people who follow the golden rule in terms of the way they deal with their customers – treating them as they would wish to be treated.

I look at our organization and I see these type people in every department. They are one of the primary reasons that the Town of Waynesville experiences the success that we do. I am prejudiced in saying that I believe we have the best group of elected officials possible, and I believe you have good management and department heads in place. But we are fortunate to be leading some of the most dedicated and hard working people you could find in any organization. We are truly blessed to have all of these elements coming together and functioning well in one place.



Finally, I want to thank you for the work that you do as elected officials. I hope the citizens realize how much you give of yourselves to make a positive difference in our community. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you and this community as the Town Manager, for I have told many people that I have one of the best jobs anywhere. Thank you for the funds and resources you provide that allows us to attract and retain such great department heads and such outstanding employees. If I could wish anything for this Town during the next decade, it would be that the community experiences as many positives as it has in the past decade.