



Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Wally Bobkiewicz, City Manager
Subject: Ninety Day Report
Date: November 6, 2009

The City Council meeting of November 9, 2009 marks my 98th day as City Manager of Evanston. I have spent part of my first three months in Evanston meeting with City staff and community members asking them these five questions:

- What is good about the City of Evanston?
- What is bad about the City of Evanston?
- What are obstacles in our way?
- What are opportunities missed?
- For employees: How can we better recognize achievements?

I have held 19 employee meetings citywide to discuss these questions and have met individually or in groups with over 90 members of the public from a list of 197 names submitted by the Mayor, Alderman and Department Directors. I will report on my overall findings of my meetings with community members at another time, but I want to share my findings from the employee meetings, some of my personal observations and a workplan for myself to implement changes based on my first 90 days:

From meetings with staff:

What is good about working for the City of Evanston?

- The diversity of the workforce.
- The opportunity to work with talented fellow staff members.
- The opportunity to serve the community.
- Evanston is an exciting place to work.
- Working here is enjoyable.
- Working here provides good professional experience.
- There are a variety of challenges.
- The salary and benefits.

What is bad about working for the City of Evanston?

It takes too long to get things done.

The condition of City offices/work/training facilities are not adequate.

Residents and fellow staff members do not understand what each department does.

There is not sufficient employee training.

There is a constant battle with the budget. The budget should be stabilized.

Technology/equipment needs to be improved.

All staff members not treated equally. Little accountability.

Organization is micro-managed.

Work of staff is not supported or valued.

What obstacles keep you from doing a great job?

Budget challenges. How can we move past them to serve residents?

Too much bureaucracy.

No priorities. Everything we do is of equal importance.

What opportunities are we missing?

Better relationship with Northwestern University.

City does not make good use of volunteers.

Better economic development activities.

Leverage the lakefront for greater economic benefit.

How can we better recognize employee achievements?

More, regular recognition, but no more coffee mugs.

Simple thank yous.

Share recognitions with all staff and the community.

My observations:

1. Working for the City of Evanston is great. The quality and dedication of staff members is outstanding.
2. Members of the Evanston community are passionate about the City.
3. The breadth and depth of services provided by the City are impressive.
4. The City is not very customer friendly. This includes reaching us for simple information, requesting services and working with us on

development/land use services and making payments to us of all kinds.

5. The format of City Council meetings do not make best use of time for anyone (members of the public, elected officials or staff).
6. The process of setting property tax rates is not in sync with the budget process which provides confusion on many levels.
7. Staff does not provide sufficient tools to the Mayor and Aldermen to do their jobs as policy makers.
8. The City needs a much greater focus on intergovernmental relations.
9. The City needs a much greater focus on economic development.
10. Citywide parking regulation policies present many challenges to the City, our residents and visitors which I believe need to be reviewed.

Given what I have learned, I am moving forward with several initiatives. First, I am dealing with some organizational issues. Assistant City Manager Marty Lyons will continue in this capacity permanently. The second Assistant City Manager position will be eliminated in the next budget.

I have asked Mr. Lyons to begin transitioning out of the role of Finance Director and will present to the City Council with the FY 2010/11 budget a plan for reorganizing our administrative services so that a new department director will be responsible for finance. Mr. Lyons will work as a chief operating officer for the organization, will have broad responsibilities for long term financial and capital planning and will assist me with day to day administration.

All department directors now report directly to me and all will work with Mr. Lyons on budget, capital project and personnel matters. I have also moved Sustainability Coordinator Carolyn Collopy back to the City Manager's Office and she reports to me. Sustainability issues need to receive a central focus in the organization.

The City has made good strides in the area of communication, especially in use of the Internet, over the last three months. I will continue to provide leadership in this area working with an interdepartmental team of staff citywide.

I have also established my own workplan for 2010 based on what I have learned the past three months:

1. **Implement City Council Goals:** This is my number one priority. I appreciate the City Council taking time in September to set these goals. The Council has been working the past several weeks to develop workplans for these goals. We have resources in place to begin addressing these goals, except in the areas of intergovernmental relations and economic development. I believe we need to assign new staff resources in these areas. In the area of operating budget and capital planning, I believe the City Council should consider changing the City's fiscal year to calendar year to help more directly align the setting of tax rates with the budget process.
2. **Improve City Council Efficiency and Effectiveness:** The Mayor and Members of the City Council are dedicated and talented individuals. I believe that the Mayor and Council could use additional tools to work even more effectively. I will propose to the City Council at your next Rules Committee meeting alternate plans for holding City Council committee and full Council meetings to make better use of time and allow better community involvement on issues. I also have been working on ways to better involve the Mayor and City Council in critical policy areas as economic development, property standards, resource allocation and public safety. There are also initiatives I would like to start to assist the Mayor and City Council to use technology better in working with your constituents.
3. **Celebrate, Recognize and Value Staff Members and Their Achievements:** In my meetings with staff members, it was clear that the organization does a poor and inconsistent job in this area. I plan to develop initiatives to provide broad recognition of staff members and their achievements, develop better ways for folks internally and externally to understand the work of our staff members. I believe that part of this recognition is providing sufficient opportunities for needed professional training for our employees. Issues of organizational culture are also very important to me. I want to make sure that the culture of the City of Evanston is one that values the contributions of all staff, celebrates the diversity of our staff and that the City as an employer is fair to all. The City should also be considered a fun and exciting place to work.
4. **Embrace Innovation in Everything We Do:** Many people around the United States look to Evanston as a place of new ideas and innovation. I want to make sure that this perception is reality. I plan to put in place programs to embrace innovation in everything we do and to allow us to take time to cultivate new ideas to better serve our residents.
5. **360 Degree Communication:** There are many component parts on how the City of Evanston currently communicates with its residents and how our residents communicate with us. I want Evanston to be a leader in this area and to create systems and initiatives that allow our residents to access all city services in an easy, friendly way and for the City to be able to communicate with our residents in ways that are convenient and meaningful to them.

6. **“Creating the Most Livable City in America”**: The City’s strategic plan identifies this phrase as the City’s vision. I want to identify more specific ways that the City can ensure progress on this vision. I believe this includes strategically evaluating all city services and benchmarking them against this vision. I am especially concerned that many of our services are not aligned to make the best use of the talents of our staff and the needs of the community. I also hope that we can leverage the existing resources of our non-profit organizations in Evanston to partner with us in implementing this vision.

It has been a very quick three months. I want to thank the Mayor, Members of the City Council, City staff and members of the community for the warm welcome my wife Patrice and I have received to Evanston.