

Fall 2007

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

My first six months as your alder have been a big adjustment. The best analogy that I can make is that becoming alder is like learning how to ride a bicycle on a tightrope in front of a large crowd.

Much of what alders do is very routine and I have spoken with many people about basic service issues, but thought people might want to know the highlights (or lowlights) of what I have been working on and positions that I have taken on key issues.

Neighborhood Conservation Districts: This ordinance had previously failed to pass the council twice and I worked very hard in my first month in office to get it approved. It allows for the establishment of special zoning districts in older neighborhoods to ensure that new houses or major additions are compatible with the surrounding buildings.

City Budget: In mid-November the Council will discuss and adopt operating and capital budgets for the City of Madison. Because the budget is so important, I am holding three "listening sessions" so that I can hear about neighbor's priorities:

- o Wednesday, October 24, 7:00-8:30 pm at the Monroe Street Library
- o Monday, October 29, 6:30-8:00 pm at the Franklin School Library
- o Tuesday, October 30, 6:30-8:00 pm at the Catholic Multi-Cultural Center

Water Utility: I will carefully follow our search for a new director of Madison's Water Utility. I voted against the termination of employment agreement with the former utility director. This was largely symbolic as I was the only alder voting 'no,' but I did not support the payment of an additional \$55,000 beyond his accrued vacation and sick pay.

Simply put, rate payers are looking at a 16% increase in water bills and people have lost faith in the management of the utility so I could not support the additional \$55,000 payout.

Chronic Nuisance Ordinance: I heard from many constituents supporting the Chronic Nuisance Ordinance, which I voted in favor of. The ordinance establishes an enforcement process that allows the city to take action when a property has three or more police calls within 90 days that result in either an arrest or citation. The ordinance can also be triggered if a property accumulates five or more building code violations within a year.

The ordinance provides for multi-step process where property owners are given an opportunity to devise a correction plan and allows for fines if problems are not resolved.

Downtown Alcohol Density Plan: I also voted in favor of an Alcohol Density Plan for downtown Madison. The plan has been described as a 'time-out' for new taverns seeking to locate between Park and Blair streets. I voted in favor of the plan because I am very concerned about the costs associated with policing downtown at bar time.

Regional Transit Authority: I supported the first step in creating of a Regional Transit Authority to fund roads, buses, commuter rail, and bike facilities. There are still several important steps before an RTA is created, including a county-wide sales tax referendum, but I supported this initial effort because bus reliable bus service is critical to many District 13 businesses and residents.

Personal: Being an alder is quite a bit of work, much of which I have been enjoying....and my "other" life has continued to march on. Our daughter started kindergarten at Franklin School. She is settling in really well and loves taking the bus. I am much less enthusiastic about the 7 A.M. bus, especially after long nights at City Council meetings.

Ron continues to travel quite a bit for work with projects in Chicago, LA, and Houston and wishes he had taken a few more motorcycle rides this past summer.

A constituent recently suggested that I read *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* by Levitt and Dubner. It was really interesting and gave me some new insights into thinking about how government works.

The Fun Stuff: One of the cool things about being an alder is that you get invited to some fun events and I try to attend as many neighborhood happenings as possible.

This past summer's yummy events included the Taste of Monroe Street in early June; the Bay Creek Neighborhood Association's Ice Cream social at Franklin School in September; and the Bram's Addition Neighborhood Association Diversity Dinner that featured a great Thai-inspired salad and delicious pork tacos.

I am always happy to hear from District 13 residents and business people...so feel free to either call or send an email letting me know about your concerns or questions!

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