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TO: City Council
FROM: Sam Anselm, Interim City Manager
DATE: 5/23/2014
RE: Weekly Report

Good afternoon, everyone. Below you will find my weekly update.

Key Meetings

- On Monday the mayor, City Attorney Edwards and I met with Kim Seavy and his wife to discuss his concerns over the city's use of the emergency clause on the various council bills that staff presents for your approval. It was a good discussion and I think there's a point where we will just have to agree to disagree over the definition of "emergency," but as a result of that conversation and Mr. Seavy's general concerns about transparency in government, during our weekly staff meeting I directed staff to do the following:
 - Include a statement on their green sheets with supporting facts or reasons why a bill is considered an emergency; and
 - When the council packets are published and available online, we will post a link to the packet on our city's home page that will make it easier for residents to find and download the information prior to our council meetings.
 - I will also be exploring ways that we can use social media or other online tools to further engage/inform residents about happenings within the city that would ultimately benefit our citizens. That being said, we already utilize Facebook and Twitter to inform the public, but admittedly we don't use those platforms to their full advantage in engaging our citizenry.

During our staff meeting on Tuesday I also asked for everyone's opinion on the idea of moving the informal meetings out to the dais so they could be recorded and streamed to the public. There are some technical/coordination issues that would need to be worked out, but during that conversation, ***an idea was proposed to use the "Presentations" portion of our council meetings to have discussions with you that would normally be covered under our informal meetings.*** I would like to hear your thoughts on this idea or other suggestions you may have on how we can improve communications with our citizens.

- On Tuesday Assistant to the City Manager Brian Kelly and I visited with Ron Sampson at Joplin Workshops to learn more about their operation and how they serve the community.
- Later that afternoon staff and I attended a meeting with Jimmer Pinjuv out at Wildwood Ranch to get an update on his projects. He had some concerns about keeping an open dialogue with staff that we were able to address, and we are working with him on some other issues that may necessitate a change to our agreement and/or our zoning code to allow certain uses on his property. If we proceed and when the time is right to do so, we will bring those to you for consideration.
- Wednesday we had our regularly-scheduled meeting with Wallace-Bajjali to get an update on their efforts. Attorney Edwards will be sending you some information about the status of the Coca-Cola property, but Raymond's focus continues to be on the development of 20th and Connecticut, and they indicated there are some key meetings scheduled in the next week or two that will help to advance that project. On a related note, RFQ's for the project manager for the library are due on Tuesday, so look for an update on that project within a couple of weeks.
- Finally, this morning Director Cotten and I met with a sculpture artist out of the St. Louis area to talk about the volunteer statue to be placed at the volunteer tribute in Cunningham Park. Having been involved with the volunteer effort to the extent that I was, this project has special meaning for me and I will be taking a keen interest in seeing it come to fruition prior to the fifth anniversary. As I mentioned last week, the arts can play a vital role in the recovery and future development of our city, so I'm looking forward to working with various individuals and organizations to advance their ideas in conjunction with our plans. More on this to come.

Miscellaneous

- To give you an update on the Burt building on 20th Street, this morning the building board of appeals granted a two week-extension at our request but also scheduled a demolition hearing for June 13th to give us time to try and work out an agreement that all parties can agree to that would allow Mr. Burt to proceed with construction on his property. It is my opinion that staff has bent over backwards to try and work with Mr. Burt to resolve this matter, and it's my hope that we can come to agreement over the next two weeks.
- In other news, staff has researched the possibility of creating a separate planning department that would operate independently of but in conjunction with the public works department, and I will be working with the legal department to present an ordinance to you for consideration in June or July. As the charter allows, council can create new departments by ordinance, but cannot take away any of the functions that are listed under departments without amending the charter, which requires a vote of the people.
- The employee committee to work on our rules and regulations will be formed next week, with meetings scheduled to begin the first week of June. As I've mentioned before, this will be a key project that HR will be focusing on over the next several months.
- We are waiting on some GPS equipment for the new trolley; once installed, we'll schedule a time for a ride-along.

To close, yesterday was capped by the dedication of the butterfly garden in Cunningham Park. If you haven't been to the site, I encourage you to do so. A bulk of the credit for completing that project goes to our dedicated parks staff under Chris' leadership, but also for their tenacity in rebuilding our parks system in the span of just three years.

I don't have enough time or space to fill these pages with accolades for what our city staff has accomplished since 5/22/11, but it truly is remarkable when you pause to think about it. The media seems to be focused on numbers, and that's not a bad thing, but when I reflect on the past three years, I think about the people behind those numbers who have worked tirelessly towards our recovery. Our faith-based partners, the school district, the medical community, and countless others have done yeoman's work over the past 36 months. But our current and former employees who have been involved will always hold a special place in my heart for their dedication and relentless perseverance during this time. I have never been more proud of a group of people, and I know many of them are looking forward to a three-day weekend, because they have certainly earned a break before we get back to it on Tuesday.

On that note, I hope you enjoy the holiday and if you plan on traveling, please be safe.