



# **July Mayor's Report Mayor Tom Hoechst The Role of Local Government**

July 10 2012 4:24 PM

Many citizens are really not quite sure of the involvement and the responsibility of local governments. While many people feel there is too much government in their lives, local governments have a very important role in the well being and life of the citizens they serve. Your police and fire protection, quality schools for your children, safe streets and recreation areas, sanitary sewer operations, refuse collection, zoning ordinances, animal control, and street lighting are just a drop in the bucket of the governance we all need and services offered by local governments.

Many people are critical of government and righteously so in many instances. On a daily basis, I hear our federal and state politicians, elected by us to serve the public, continue to be bogged down and labeled as ineffective or incompetent, usually divided by party lines. Too much partisanship is evident on a daily basis in state and federal governing bodies. This results in little being accomplished because extreme positions make compromising difficult. When is the last time you heard a politician compliment someone from the opposing party? No one is right or wrong all of the time.

Fortunately for local governments, we are not subjected to those obstructions. In local government, because of less bureaucracy and the fact party lines do not normally come into play in small to medium sized communities, we can react quickly to the needs of constituents. Mayors and Aldermen are the closest form of government to the people. You can see the immediate results of your decisions and converse with the very people you represent on a daily basis. Local government officials go to the same churches, eat at the same restaurants, and shop in the same stores as the people that placed them in office. Local government is a place where contrasting views can be discussed without party politics. It is a very personable form of government and one I thoroughly enjoy.

A Mayor spends a great deal of time as a problem solver responding to citizen complaints and making sure they know what a local government can and cannot do. In many cases, we can cut through red tape with other agencies or direct them as to an appropriate contact person and agency for help solving their needs.

Unfortunately everyone cannot always be satisfied. It is the responsibility of the Mayor and Aldermen to sometimes tell people what they do not want to hear or that we cannot solve their problems with the desired outcome. I have found, almost unanimously, after an explanation has been given, all reasonable people are satisfied. One of the biggest mistakes an elected official makes is not responding with both good and bad news. Even a negative explanation builds trust and respect from most people. Government itself, at all levels is neither good nor bad. The individuals who run the government cause good or bad things to happen.

In about 150 days, you will be asked to vote for the person of your choice to represent you at many levels of government. Once again, I encourage you to do your own research and try to understand the complexity of good governance. Do not be fooled by party labels or unreasonable ideals, distorted media ads, half truths, or, worse yet, intentional lies. Billions of dollars will be spent vying for your vote. If you really want to get to the bottom of a candidates platform, follow the money.

We are fortunate to have a safety valve in this country to support or remove people for or from public office; it is called voting. It is a beautiful idea that still works.