



Alton's Mayor Tom Hoechst March Report

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(March 1, 2010 - Alton, IL) - According to a recent survey by Conference Board, only 45% of employees today are satisfied with their work, an all time low since the first study by Conference Board in 1987. Low job satisfaction can squelch innovations and productivity. Unsatisfied employees become unhealthy – psychologically, emotionally, and sometimes physically. At some point, they no longer work at their fullest potential. A healthy company with unhealthy employees cannot survive and prosper. Reduced wages, rising health care cost, and increased pension cost cutting into pay checks contribute to the unhappiness of employees.

Unfortunately, most of the blame for this lack of employee satisfaction falls on uninspired leadership. Most of the population is experiencing economic and financial hardships unseen since the Great Depression. Many leaders have never led during a genuine crisis and are ill-equipped to handle the situation. Many of today's leaders looked good when economic times were better, but tough times can reveal weaknesses. However, difficult times also allow true leaders to rise to their full potential and sound, wise leadership is needed in today's world.

Last year, upon becoming Mayor of Alton, the first budget I was presented had a deficit of approximately \$2 Million. Many difficult adjustments were made to allow us to operate the City in just a basic survival mode. Painful reductions in staff and reduced spending on streets and other infrastructure projects were initiated. As the fiscal year 2010-2011 budget is prepared, overwhelming financial shortages remain.

Without the help of our employees, the City's financial figures would be starker. The firefighters and teamsters stepped up to the plate and accepted a wage freeze for the next twelve months. Last year, non-union employees forfeited six months of their cost of

living adjustments and will not be receiving a pay increase in 2010. No elected official received a pay increase last year nor will they receive one this year. In the Police Department, three officers were laid off, but, due to the federal COPS grant which pays for those officers, they were called back to work. Unfortunately, employees represented by the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union declined the City's offer and two employees were laid off. I have no control over the AFSCME employees' decision; I respect their decision, but I am very disappointed. The morale factor alone of knowing that you can go to sleep at night secure in your employment should have weighed heavily in their deliberations. Since becoming Mayor, 40 positions within the City's government have been left unfilled.

A city's structure is like a whole pie. If one slice is missing, the pie becomes distorted. All departments have a role to play and each is equally important. We will revisit all jobs and restructure as needed. Government operations, as we have always known it, will never be the same after this recession and, as with all things in life, we must accept change in order to survive.

As I try to lead in a positive manner, I believe a leader must be active, out in front, and lead by example. I realize a true leader must be clear about where they are going and present a vision of performance and expectations for their staff. One must surround themselves with competent department heads and let them lead. One of the biggest morale problems of the workforce to