

Dear Longview,

As the end of my campaign for Mayor was coming to a close, I promised you that if elected, I hoped to continue my letters to you. Through a partnership with the Longview News Journal, this column will be just that. An opportunity for me to share with you the things happening in Longview and maybe even some perspective and background information on progress being made by the City Council. I am appreciative to the Longview News Journal for the opportunity.

Our City Council has gotten off to a great start. Having just two meetings and a budget workshop under our belt, we have already made good strides. We have voted to remove the red light cameras and forged a partnership between the Paula Martin Jones Recreation Center and Thrive 360 – a new organization that will serve Longview’s youth during the summer and after school. I am proud to say that our Council, after LISTENING to the interests of our citizens, was able to accommodate the wishes of the current patrons of Paula Martin Jones and the young people who are the future patrons of the center. It is my hope and prayer that collaboration will be one of the legacies of this City Council. This Council has shown a commitment to tackling issues head on for the betterment of this community.

I am appreciative of the effort of Paula Martin Jones Charities in wanting to provide young people a positive role model to look up to. This is something many of us take for granted, but we cannot assume that **everyone** has **someone**. In my life, I was fortunate to have an amazing father who gave beyond himself to my brothers and me his entire life. I am particularly mindful of his impact on my life today, as it is Father’s Day. The role of a father cannot be underestimated. As a father myself, I am reminded of both the privilege and responsibility that accompanies that blessing. So, pause for a moment: if you had a good father, know a good father or are a good father, this is a day to be thankful.

Brighten your corner

Each time I write to you, I would like to share with you something specific that I am going to try to focus on in the upcoming weeks to improve our community. I would encourage you to embark on this journey with me. As Ms. Alyce Maxey shared with me at a recent World Café function, “I may not can do much, but I can **brighten my corner of the world.**” I hope Ms. Maxey doesn’t mind me borrowing her phrase and sharing it with you. It has stayed with me now for several weeks. Imagine if we all, as individuals, made it an intentional priority to “brighten our corner of the world”. Longview would be so bright, that nobody could dim our flame. This week, in my corner of the world, I plan to reach out to young people who could use an encouraging word or hand to lift them up. Would you join me? I would love to hear your stories of “corner brightening”, so please share them!

Upcoming Focus

Your City Council has already been looking at the upcoming city budget which will be implemented on October 1. With the slowdown in our local oilfield economy, we need to be fiscally responsible and “tighten the belt”. We will need to seek additional ways to bring in revenue to our city without raising taxes. This will be a challenge as we anticipate sales tax revenues decreasing, all while having increasing needs. One of which is to fully staff our police department. Our police force is understaffed by 12 officers and in order to attract new cadets and retain veterans our pay must be competitive with neighboring cities. It is currently less than our neighbors which does not help us in keeping our city safe – what we all want and desire.

We will also be looking at creative ways to increase revenue. One of the things I would like our Council to consider is a better utilization of Lear Park. Currently, Lear Park is only utilized less than half of the year and still has an economic impact of \$12.7 million dollars of revenue to the city. If we can increase the number of weekends the parks are utilized, we can easily increase our revenues – all while sprucing up Longview’s parks for our children. This would be a win-win for Longview.

I would also like to revisit the possibility of selling excess water to Kilgore. Longview is blessed to have an abundance of water through our 100 year contract with Lake of the Pines. Selling our excess would be an easy way to provide revenues to fund our future needs and keep our water rates low for our citizens. I have some other ideas as well that I will address in upcoming letters. We will need to be innovative thinkers to accomplish our goals in the coming months. Please join me in thinking outside the box and share your ideas on how to increase revenue without increasing taxes.

Thanks to the warm nights and PLENTY of rain, we will be having fresh tomatoes in about 2 weeks.

Study hard, have some fun and say your prayers,

Andy