
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

TO: City Commission

FROM: Robert DiSpirito, City Manager *RGD*

DATE: December 30, 2009

SUBJECT: 2009 Year-End Review

Much as was the case in 2008, this past year of 2009 has been a picture of contrasts. On one hand, the City of Dunedin continued to receive some significant accolades directly related to the range and quality of services that our employees provide for city residents and guests. On the other hand, we experienced a wrenching but necessary exercise in re-organizing and streamlining this government. As was the case in 2008, we were saddened in 2009 by the loss in this process of some truly outstanding City employees.

In 2009, we basked in our first year of renown as Florida's sole "City of Excellence" awardee, and were further recognized for our excellence in Parks & Recreation, Public Works and the Library, as well as achieving a "Communities for a Lifetime" award by Florida's Department of Elder Affairs. These awards were attained as a capstone to the full range of high-quality City services provided to our residents. Amazingly, this occurred even though from October, 2007 and through the adopted plan for 2010, we reduced our budget by nearly \$8 million dollars and our personnel complement by fully 50 positions. We accomplished this feat without having to adjust our millage rate one bit, nor did we tap into the General Fund's unencumbered reserves.

It has been a monumental team effort, in my opinion, featuring the City Commission, the public, volunteer boards, the executive team, mid-level department managers and front-line employees. I sincerely appreciate everybody's contributions. Our accomplishments to date allow us to stand apart from the county government and nearly every other city in Pinellas. Pulling this feat off for a third consecutive year will be tough, but if any jurisdiction can find a way, then it will be us.

What follows is a list of some of the projects and initiatives representative of what we worked on together in 2009. A number of these were completed, some others were begun and are now an active work-in-progress. This list is representative rather than a complete accounting of the many accomplishments by City employees and the Commission in 2009:

1. A **balanced Fiscal Year 2010 budget** featuring no reduction in public services was crafted with no need to adjust the millage rate, and unobligated General Fund reserves were not tapped. This plan, adopted unanimously by the Commission, closed an initial funding gap of \$3.5 million (about \$3 million for FY2010 and \$500,000 for mid-year FY2009). Continued significant departmental re-organizations resulted in 18 positions not being proposed for FY2010, for a total of 50 positions since FY2007.
2. A **new and much-improved agreement was successfully achieved with the Dunedin Golf Club**, following lengthy and complicated negotiations. The Commission unanimously approved a more business-like plan that permits a closer working relationship, greater welcoming to the public, joint planning of capital improvements, more transparency and professional management of club operations, and enhanced responsible stewardship of this public course.
3. Successfully negotiated the **purchase by the City of the 3-acre "Grove Tract"** at the Dunedin Golf Club for the purpose of installing a major storm water retention feature that will help to prevent flooding of adjacent residential neighborhoods (Dunedin Isles). The purchase price was low, the City is securing grants for the majority of the construction cost, and the public will continue to be able to access most of this site for the practice of golf, which is the current use. The Golf Club, by agreement, must use the proceeds of this sale to make much-needed repairs to publicly-owned buildings and infrastructure on the course.
4. City **RFP** process was successful in attracting several viable private firms, one of whom (Billy Casper Golf, Inc.) we are presently negotiating to manage the City's **St. Andrews' Links**, the operation of which has been increasingly expensive.
5. The City's **development codes** are well into the process of **being overhauled** (not tweaked), in an effort to introduce greater flexibility, utility and relevancy. Best practices, such as "form-based" codes, are being recommended. The Planning Dept. and Engineering Division continued in 2009 to host "**Customer Task Force**" meetings to solicit honest feedback from the private development sector who interface with our operations. Feedback has been instrumental to helping us craft code improvements. The public counter/waiting area to these City services, on the second floor of the Tech Services building, was drastically improved in 2009 (more personal customer service, new signage and literature, public access to computer terminal to check status of permits, a true waiting area created, etc.). Finally, the **Development Review Committee (DRC)** of key City development staff meets every other week with project owners to address and advance projects through the review process. This group is led by the Project Coordinator (Lael Giebel) who now reports directly and independently to the City Manager as an advocate for an expeditious process. As a result, complaints are greatly reduced, and projects move more efficiently through the necessary regulatory process.
6. Negotiations with Pinellas County regarding **Fire/EMS funding** resulted in Dunedin achieving the best deal in the county, i.e., the most funding with the least strings attached, relative to the other cities.

7. The **Patricia and Douglas Avenue corridor studies**, with much public and Commission feedback, were completed in 2009. Staff commenced the process (RFP) for the **“Causeway Corridor,”** and planning began for the **“Marina Corridor”** and that of State Route 580 in 2010.
8. The **CRA Master Plan** was updated in 2009 for the first time since 1988.
9. A **Downtown Parking study** was accomplished in 2009.
10. A **city-wide Economic Development Master Plan** was commenced in 2009, and will be completed in spring, 2010.
11. An examination of options for eventual replacement of the **Highlander Pool** was conducted in 2009 by a retained, professional firm, who will make a presentation to the Commission and public in January.
12. A **Facilities And Space Needs Analysis (FASNA) study** was conducted in 2009, the results of which were presented to the Commission in several public meetings.
13. Retained ICMA to conduct the **first outside review of the City’s contract for professional services with the Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office** since it was entered into in 1995. That study is completed and being prepared for Commission review. For the first time, successfully negotiated a higher level of public service (more traffic enforcement in response to current needs) for significantly less cost than was the case in last year’s contract with the Sheriff.
14. The **Gateway project** forged ahead with final City approvals attained (including final site plan, zoning, land use and development agreement). The site was cleared and infrastructure installed (new utilities, street, sidewalks, etc.). The Main Street reconstruction (street reduced to two lanes, installing pedestrian crossings and streetscape, burying power lines, etc.) was well under way in 2009. City staff is working closely with Pizzuti to obtain initial leases and to market the project.
15. Commenced major initiative to identify improvements to Dunedin’s **South Side neighborhoods**. Effort featured on-site public meetings and multi-departmental approach that will continue into 2010.
16. Increased numerous **departmental fees**, some of which had not been adjusted in several decades, to better reflect actual costs to provide those valued services.
17. In 2009, City utility division **staff in the Finance Department identified specific, years-old mistakes in the calculations of some utility rates** (storm water, water & sewer), that resulted in certain previously-undetected under billings, in some cases for nearly ten years. These findings were immediately brought to the attention of the Commission, public and rate payers (transparency), mistakes were corrected with the

very next billing cycles, an RFP was generated and a professional independent audit firm was retained to scrutinize City utility calculations and accounts. Initial outcomes (Phase I) are estimated to be presented to the Commission by February, 2010, with review of thousands of individual accounts (Phase II) expected to take more time. The upside is that no previously-planned City utility projects have failed to be funded during period of time. Also, the utility funds will collect more revenue than was the case before, and future rate increase recommendations could be less as a result of that fact.

18. The **Fenway project** received final City approvals, including site plan, development agreement, zoning, land use and infrastructure. This included reconciling the last of what had originally been numerous and significant objections from much of the adjacent neighborhood, solving difficult storm water design issues per City and State code, and navigating the 10-month State approval for creating a new zoning category (historic overlay). All of these items were technically very complex and necessarily time-consuming, further complicated in the past few years by significant changes in the project design, outside financing plan, and the developer's working team itself (architect, engineer, financial partners and marketing personnel).
19. In 2009, we began a process of improving our **Community Policing program**. This includes working closely with the Sheriff's Office to examine the current program, and reaching out to city residents to obtain input for improvements. This out reach effort has included conducting in 2009 the first two of three planned community evening meetings in different locations within the city. The feedback gained at these forums will help us greatly in designing a more meaningful and tailored approach to providing neighborhood-level policing services to our residents.
20. Significant **improvements for Causeway Blvd.** were installed in 2009, with more approved and in progress. We completed the sidewalk network on the north side of this important and heavily-used street, improved handicap access, and installed three (first-ever) pedestrian crossings to promote safety. Additionally, plans and funding were approved by the Commission to install, in the coming months, substantial landscaping and welcoming signage with which to provide a better gateway to Honeymoon and Caladisi state parks, as well as the causeway.
21. Staff worked with the Commission in establishing a **Storm Water Advisory Committee**, and in exploring the creation of new citizen advisory boards for **Public Safety** and **Community Services**.
22. In the wake of a problematic "Precautionary Boil Water Notice" in 2009, a new **Emergency Public Notification program** was created by staff and approved by PRAAC and the Commission, to improve our ability to quickly inform residents of matters of importance. This includes a more efficient Reverse 911 system and better protocols amongst City departments and outside organizations.
23. In addition to those of Causeway Blvd., other much-needed **pedestrian crossing projects** were approved for 2010 construction. This includes establishing pedestrian

“refuge island” crossings on State Route 580 (three) subject to approval by FDOT, Edgewater Drive (at least one), Weaver Park and possibly across from the library.

24. **Storm water improvement projects and major street reconstruction (with bike lanes) were assigned higher priority** by the Commission and staff during the formulation of the FY2010 budget and the 6-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
25. The **“Spray Ground” children’s aquatic facility** was opened in Highlander Park in 2009, receiving a tremendous response and much use by the public. A significant portion of the funding was sought and achieved when the Dunedin Kiwanis Club agreed to sponsor \$50,000 of the cost, and Recreation staff secured a State grant for \$200,000.
26. Other **accomplishments in Parks & Recreation** include striking a new agreement with the Sheriff’s Office to establish a **Police Athletic League (PAL) program** in conjunction with City Recreation and the School District, adoption of a **dog leash ordinance** applying to all public places including City parks, facilitating a succession plan for the **Scottish Heritage program** director position, **demolishing two derelict structures** in Weaver Park, needed **maintenance projects** at the Dunedin Marina (floating docks, façade of Marina building) and Highlander Pool (repaired pool deck and mechanicals, new storage shed, and asphalted parking lot), and obtaining two sizeable **grants for Weaver Park**. An **access bridge** was constructed connecting the Harris Tract to Hammock Park. Field #1 at **Fisher Fields** (Little League) was totally renovated. The Blatchley House at Weaver Park was placed on the **National Register of Historic Places**.
27. Successful recruitment of an outstanding **Assistant to the City Manager** (Angela Montgomery) to replace retired Harry Gross, and permanent appointment (internal promotion) of a very capable **Division Director for Solid Waste** (Bill Pickrum).
28. There were a number of **projects completed by Public Works** in 2009, including Hammock Park re-hydration, Cedar Creek off-line detention project, Rosewood ditch, and installation of a new masonry perimeter wall at the Waste Treatment Plant to better screen it for the neighborhood. Entryway signs were installed for the first time at the city’s corporate lines on Curlew Road (near County Road 1) and State Route 580 (at Belcher Road). Dangerous intersections were re-aligned on State Route 580 at Pinehurst, as well as Virginia / Sunlight. The access road to Happy Tails Dog Park (also used by parents of children attending Garrison Elementary School) was paved for the first time, as was the parking lot adjacent to the swimming pool and Spray Ground at Highlander Park.
29. The **entrance to the Dunedin Public Library** received a long-needed rehabilitation in 2009, to rave reviews by patrons of the library. Both aesthetics and function (more seating area and bike racks, etc.) were accomplished in this partnership of the City and Friends of the Dunedin Public Library.