

Boyd: Council does fine, but needs public input

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council."

Even though she manages to get to council as often as possible, Boyd acknowledges that most people just don't have the time to go.

"It's not a hopeless cause. People have their own lives. They're busy. And unless there's a particular interest they don't go."

Boyd also includes another angle in her thoughts about public involvement: "When you elect people you're saying, 'I can't be there so I send the store.' They expect those people (council and administration) to do the day-to-day running of the city."

BASED ON HER years of experience as a council watcher, Boyd believes the city is well-managed. But she's quick to add her disappointment with the lack of public input.

"The council does a good job, but

they could really use the public's input," she said. "It helps for the audience to express their opinions. People in the audience can give council an idea of what's really."

And sometimes the politics which accompany the council's decision process also bothers Boyd. Her idea of a true leader is someone who cares about the city, has "complete 100 percent honesty, compassion and caring and common sense."

In other words, Boyd believes council members should "have the courage to do what is right for this city not what's right for special interest groups. You can't have favoritism. You can't have spot decisions."

While Boyd admits she's idealistic about the characteristics she wants in a city leader, a streak of the realist also tells her "you've got to realize you're dealing with human beings."

"THERE ARE SOME members up

there that are doing the job. They aren't worrying about the next election. That's why election after election, they are being re-elected."

"They have to get the politics out of the city. They have to make the hard decisions that will keep the city moving ahead. It's like a house. If you don't fix

the roof, you'll have to condemn the property."

With so many ideas and characteristics in mind of what a leader should be, Boyd says running for council is not one of her goals. She prefers sitting in the audience, learning and working for an issue when necessary.

"Sitting out in the audience I have

more power than sitting up on the council. I can say what I want. At least they have to listen to me."

Because the council watchers are well known by council members who "know we don't have any particular allegiance," Boyd believes the city leaders take watchers' opinions seriously.

"Because they know us . . . with the dealings we have had with most council members, they realize we are not radical, we are not trying for our own personal gain. We're idealistic. But you have to have ideals. And I think council members realize we're honest, that we care and we're not stupid."

Vagnozzi is the 'senior' watcher

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the audience actually influence council, Vagnozzi is convinced he is listened to and gets a reaction.

"I do think they pay some attention," he said. "They probably pay more attention to me because I've been there so long. I think it would take someone awhile to establish that."

Residents tend to come out to council only when the issue affects them directly, he said. Taxes and zoning issues are the big audience draws.

"To most people, it (local government) is so far away," Vagnozzi said, about apathetic city residents. After years of council watching though, he contends public influence works with council only on issues "they are already weak on." If 100 people turned out in support of senior citizen housing, he said, public opinion may, not sway a council already sure of avoiding involvement in the housing business.

"Like zoning and taxes, they (council members) are for it unless there's a show of support on the other side," Vagnozzi said.

Despite his criticism of the council,

Vagnozzi believes the city is well managed.

"To a large extent, they (council members) are letting the professional staff carry out what they are supposed to," Vagnozzi said.

What bothers Vagnozzi is that while council asks the staff to prepare a report on an issue, their response when it is presented is to "nitpick at it in order to claim they cut taxes; or to claim they cut out appropriations for a need-ful computer."

Council is often criticized as of late for so-called "personality politics" and for personal bickering and one-upmanship. But Vagnozzi contends that's part of non-partisan politics.

"Each person is their own party," he said. "You'll find more of it in non-partisan government."

"But I think you have to have some cohesive element. That's the role the mayor has to play. The one thing the mayor can do is pull that council together. The mayor shouldn't make it a position of power but should ameliorate the positions of council."

Bringing council back to an issue at hand when individual council members drift into their own public philosophies-

ing is what Vagnozzi believes a mayor should do.

"I would hope they would get their act together with the start of a new year," Vagnozzi said, offering advice to council. "Forget the next election and

do what is right for this community."

"Plan now for the future. It's already overdue. But let's get started on the things we need. This community is not one to demand a lot, but there are certain things we must do."

Drive cautiously on snow and ice

Slow and easy.

According to Norman Darwick, executive director of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, those are two key words that give motorists extra advantage in solving winter driving problems.

Darwick contends that stubbornly sticking to 35 mph (or to other posted limits) regardless of conditions on slippery pavements or when visibility is restricted during winter storms.

From a speed of 55 mph on good, dry pavement, a car can be braked to a stop in about 150 feet.

By contrast, a speed of only 20 mph

on glare ice can produce braking distances of about 150 feet — close to nine car lengths.

"In other words," Sarwick points out, "for equal stopping ability, speeds on glare ice should be cut to about one-third of those considered reasonable under ideal conditions."

Skid testers also emphasize the importance of temperature changes in relation to the slipperiness of ice and packed snow. At temperatures near freezing, the braking distance on glare ice may stretch out to as much as 280 feet (about 15 car lengths) from 20 mph.

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