

About the City  
By  
Councilman Kingery

My time on City Council will soon be finished and I want to share and review some of the events of the last 8 years. I have shared information with you over the years because I believe it is important for all of us to know as much as we can about the City and what is going on. How does it work and why do we do what we do?

When I started on the City Council the City was financially experiencing a difficult time. We had projects that needed done and we had very little financial ability to meet the needs. The previous City Council had struggled and did the best they could with what they had to work with. The newspaper and many Douglas residents were upset much of the time and hard on the City Council. I wasn't there so I assume they were making the best decisions they could as a group working with the staff they had at the time and financial ability of the City.

When I came on the Council Steve Henning had recently been hired and he was doing his best to correct and improve the situation at hand. Steve had many years of experience with a varied background and was very good at seeing into the middle of a problem and determining what and why things were as they were. Not everyone agreed with me on this and some even worked behind the scenes to sabotage what he was trying to do. In my opinion this worked against the benefit of the City and stood in the way of progress at times. If you find yourself behind the scenes causing unrest, please consider using a positive approach to help solve problems in the future. I believe you will feel better about what you do and others will be more willing to work with you. Believe in being part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

Soon after I started on the Council our economy picked up and we started having more to work with financially. Our City Administrator was wise in counseling us to not budget the increased funds that we were fortunate to have. Instead he encouraged us to pay off City debts and do projects that needed done with this extra funding. We kept the budget as close as we could to a non-boom time level. Council and the mayor all agreed and were determined to use the extra funding to get the City into a better financial situation. During that boom period we paid off City debts and were able to do several projects that had been awaiting funding.

Steve worked with the council and continued to improve our staffing positions by helping staff improve if they would and changing staff when necessary. Steve expected high standards and I agree with that philosophy. I believe we will get very close to what we expect, so expect greatness! I didn't always agree with Steve, however he had a lot more knowledge and experience than myself! Unfortunately, some people had to go so that others could go forward with progress.

When Steve Henning left we hired Tony Tolstedt to be our Administrator. Tony had much less experience, however had lots of savvy and enthusiasm for the job. Tony continued to advise the position of not funding boom money and to hold the budget down as much as we could. During the boom continuation we did several projects including the new Transfer Station at the land fill. Tony helped get grants and we were able to build and pay as we went. Tony was very good at obtaining grants and consistently obtained considerable grant money for Douglas. During this time we found that as our City became more financially stable the State was more willing to fund our projects because we were being fiscally responsible. We set standards that other municipalities were encouraged to follow. By the time the boom came to an end we had completed several projects, had the City out of debt and had set aside almost \$40 million to help fund us during the down time. The City had funding set aside to pay our share of the new Law Enforcement facility that has been built, and we still have several million on hand to help with needed projects.

With a new City Administrator, Jonathan Teichert, and seemingly into a new boom time, the Council, Mayor and City Administrator still believe in continuing our process of keeping budgets as low as we can and saving for the future while we continue to bring forward projects that have been awaiting funding. It will continue to be my hope that the new Council, Mayor and City Administrator will continue this practice and not spend beyond what is practical for the long term.

*To be continued...*