



Tuesday, August 29, 2015

LRCent Committee Board Presentation & Report

Introductions

Co-Chair: Dr. Sybil Jordan Hampton

Co-Chair: Peter McKinney O'Connor

Mayor and members of the board thank you for allowing us the opportunity to come before you and report on the LRCent committee. The committee currently has one vacancy in the the ward four (4) position which should be filled in the next few weeks. We were all very saddened by the sudden and unfortunate passing of one of our very dedicated committee members, Chrystal Gray, who represented Ward 1. Her very thoughtful input will very much be missed.

Dr. Hampton

At our last committee meeting we were excited to receive a very positive financial report given by Finance Director, Sara Lenehan. The over all collection of sales tax revenue through the month of June was up 4.34% as compared to the same time last year. This of course is a great sign that things are improving and we can only hope our economic progress continues.

Public Safety

It seems hard to believe but 2015 marks the fourth year since the City began collecting the 3/8 cent tax for capital projects which has allowed the completion of several major public safety projects that were promised to the citizens impacting multiple wards throughout the City. Since our last report in November of 2014, progress has been made to move forward with the West Little Rock Police Station renovations which hopefully will be completed by March, 2016.

Public Works

As you all know, the Public Works Department conducted meetings in each of your wards to begin the process of determining which infrastructure projects will be considered for the 2016-2018 cycle. The Public Works Department is continuing to move as quickly as possible to repair the City's infrastructure. Since our last report the City Board has authorized twenty-six additional construction projects to move forward at an estimated cost of \$7.9 million dollars.

Fleet

The Fleet Department has also tried to fulfill the commitment to replace aging vehicles and provide new ones to accommodate additional staff that has been hired. This year so far the Fleet Department has been authorized to spend over \$1.9 million dollars replacing vehicles and equipment which has included the purchase of thirty (30) police cars.

In Other areas

The Little Rock Parks department continues to make park improvements to enhance the quality of life for citizens, as you know the construction of the West Central Community Center in Ward 6 is underway as well as the acquisition of additional property.

The Little Rock Zoo also continues to update its exhibits to provide a quality experience for visitors from all over the state. Currently under construction is the Arkansas Heritage project and a new python exhibit and a gray water treatment plant.

Our Information and Technology Department has continued its efforts to provide the tools to City employees to help do their jobs. Most recently the Department has been authorized to spend over \$200,000 to make significant upgrades to the City's website to make it more user friendly for City Staff and for Public use.

All of these capital projects have helped us address many of the pressing needs that the City has not been able to deal with in the past due to limited funding and I am pleased to report that we are making progress and all of these dollars help to provide jobs to our local economy.

Peter McKinney O'Connor

5/8 Cent Operational

While Capital Projects are essential and it is exciting to visibly see much needed construction taking place it also takes a dedicated staff to help make these things happen. The 5/8 Cent Operational revenue has helped to fill a vacancies and provide needed services for our citizens.

Public Safety

As Dr. Hampton mentioned a top priority to citizens was public safety and a commitment was made that fifty-two (52) new police officers would be hired and twenty-seven (27) grant funded positions would be retained. While that commitment has been fulfilled, the Police Department continues to have some turnover.

Ten (10) new 911/311 Communications call takers have been hired (eleven (11) vacancies still remain and they are actively recruiting applicants.

The Department of Housing and Neighborhood Programs has fulfilled its commitment to hire twenty (20) Code Enforcement Officers to patrol our neighborhoods and efficiently respond to violations and four (4) new Animal Services Staff.

Another component of addressing public safety is dealing with the human aspect. As you know the Department of Community Programs has contracted with several agencies in our community to help provide re-entry services to individuals who were previously incarcerated. This is a critical step in helping to curb criminal activity in our communities.

It is important to highlight the success of several of these programs. It was last reported to the committee that 375 individuals had been enrolled and of those, 213 participants were placed in employment.

Community Programs has continued the partnership with Public Works through the re-entry sidewalk program. The in-house Sidewalk Program has completed 103,655 square feet of new sidewalks since July 2012. This concept has extended into other City Departments who already have, or are looking to train and hire individuals to work in other capacities within the City.

Closing

From the Capital to the Operational side, the commitments made to the citizens of our city is being met on many levels. As a committee we value our responsibility to ask questions and request information that ensures accountability and transparency and all of this information is available online at www.lrcent.org . We certainly welcome the public to attend any of our meetings which are advertised and held quarterly.

All of these accomplishments are part of our commitment to the citizens of this City to use their tax dollars wisely. This is a ten year process and there is still much work to be done, however we are on track.