



CITY NOTES

August 24, 2017

IT IS TIME TO MOVE ON

The job of a City Manager is never easy and the past few years have been made even more challenging by an unrelenting tirade of mean-spirited, personal attacks on a couple local social media sites and from certain critics in the community. This is not the place for me to defend myself or to talk about how destructive such bullying is. But I will say this - it is time to move on folks. Stop the blame game. Become engaged in civil dialogue about the future of our community. Come to City Council meetings, share your ideas, run for public office, vote.

A City Manager needs a supportive City Council to be successful and to move big initiatives forward. I am fortunate that for most of my long career here in Fort Bragg I worked with City Councils who were able to articulate their visions, keep their eyes on the big picture and offer me strong support and encouragement. That enabled me to stay focused on helping the Council, City staff and the community address immediate challenges and prepare for the future. Together, we accomplished a great deal. Our current City Council is divided in its support for me and that makes it difficult for us to move this City forward.

Last week, the City Council and I agreed to a mutual parting of the ways once they complete the recruitment process for Fort Bragg's next City Manager. I am committed to making this as smooth a transition as possible for our staff, the Council and the incoming City Manager. This is especially important in order to attract a qualified field of City Manager candidates. I sincerely hope that the community, the Council, and City staff will all coalesce in support of a new and highly-skilled City Manager who brings fresh energy and enthusiasm to the job. I also hope that the City Council will be unanimous in its selection of Fort Bragg's next City Manager.

Hiring a new City Manager is one of the most consequential decisions a City Council will ever make. If a good hiring decision is made, the new City Manager can help the City achieve its full potential. If the wrong decision is made, it can be costly on many fronts- financial, employee morale, organizational stability, community relations, failure to make progress. There will be opportunities in the coming weeks and months for the Council and the community to consider what the City wants from its next City Manager- What does the organization need? What expertise, skills, and temperamental qualities are most important? What are the key priorities for the new City Manager to address?

This is also an opportunity for the Council and the community to develop an understanding of how the Council-Manager form of government works in cities such as Fort Bragg. The City Council is elected to represent the community and to develop a long-range vision for the City's future. Political power is shared by the entire Council and policy direction is provided to the City Manager by the Council as a whole rather than individually. The City Manager is given the authority and responsibility to run the City organization. She or he is responsible for oversight of day-to-day operations and for making sure

that the policies and the vision of the Council are implemented. Again, choosing a new City Manager is an incredibly important decision for the Council.

By next January, I will have served as Fort Bragg's City Manager for 13 years and prior to that as its Community Development Director for six years. I am immensely grateful to have had this opportunity to direct my passion and skills to helping Fort Bragg meet the challenges of a changing world. It has been a great privilege to live, work and raise my family in this community. I love Fort Bragg. I plan to stay here and will remain committed to the betterment of this town. I believe that my departure from City government will have positive outcomes for me, both personally and professionally. And I am hopeful that the City Council, working with a new City Manager, will be successful in addressing the challenges that lie ahead for Fort Bragg.

I would like to thank the many people in this community who have expressed their support and appreciation for the work that I have done on behalf of the City of Fort Bragg and for all that we have accomplished over the past 18 years. Those kind words have helped me keep a positive perspective about who Fort Bragg is and where this community is headed.

City Notes is published on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. If you have questions or suggestions regarding this column or any matter of City business, feel free to contact City Manager Linda Ruffing at LRuffing@fortbragg.com or (707)961-2829.