



City of Leavenworth

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City Council
Carl J. Florea - *Mayor*
Carolyn Wilson
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Zeke Reister
City Administrator - *Vacant*

May 20, 2020

Community Members,

Last night there were six area residents who joined me, Councilmember Sharon Waters, and our new City Administrator Ana Cortez-Steiner, in an online Zoom meeting. It was a great time for a few people to get a chance to meet Ana. But it also became very evident that it was also a time where some people could ask their questions as to what is really going on with the City and our plans moving forward. We spent about 90 minutes together, during which time some questions were directed to Ana about her style, about her priorities, etc. But then there were a lot of questions that just had to do with all the stuff we are dealing with now because of COVID. Questions about why the downtown was being opened as a pedestrian only space. Questions about parking. It felt very productive and useful. And then it got me to thinking... (sometimes it takes a lot for that to happen!)

Prior to COVID-19, I had written a blurb for our spring newsletter, (that issue subsequently got scrapped, as a great deal of it became irrelevant very fast, and we were treading water at that point), about my plan to start making myself available to any community members who simply had questions or concerns to meet with me. I was going to do this by holding a weekly coffee time downtown at one of the local coffee shops. I was going to call it “Mondays with the Mayor” and was going to hold it in the mornings and move it around to all the wonderful coffee shops we have in this town. And this was not my original idea. I have to give full credit to Councilmember Mia Bretz, who held her own coffee time for constituents, and with whom I had met a couple of times at her coffee events. (My ideas are rarely original, but I am good at stealing the great ones! – or I should say, “appropriating”.) This was just another small way I wanted to make myself available and to demonstrate my desire to have an open door policy and open communication with those who may not want to attend a formal council meeting. And so, along with a whole lot of other things, that opportunity was put on hold as we found ourselves buried with COVID, and unable to meet face-to-face.

Meanwhile, I went from having face-to-face meetings to going into the world of virtual meetings. This was not something I embraced whole-heartedly, but something that was foisted upon me due to the restrictions brought about by the pandemic. I think I might have shared with you previously that one Friday, I actually had seven Zoom meetings! This from someone who had not heard of Zoom 4 months ago, and who had only used my iPhone to hold a Facetime meeting with my grandkids a couple of times prior to this. My streaming world has been greatly expanded! Now we are holding Council meetings by Zoom. I hired my Administrator through Zoom interviews, and we are now holding Committee meetings by Zoom as well. Welcome to this new reality, Carl!

But, just to show you how slow I am on the uptake. It never occurred to me that I could hold my community “Mondays with the Mayor” meetings virtually! Duh!! Why not, for now, just offer a weekly time when anyone who would like, could just join a Zoom virtual meeting to talk about whatever is on their mind, get something off their chest, or make a suggestion or observation, or.... whatever?! It was actually the great meeting we had last night with some area residents and Ana that brought this idea back to my mind. Like I said, I never claimed to be quick. But rather than calling it “Mondays with the Mayor”, we are going to call it, “Community Q & A” (I know, “Mondays with the Mayor” had a nicer ring to it.) But Ana and I, for the foreseeable future, will make ourselves available to any in the community who might want to ask a question, seek clarification, offer an opinion, or just chat. We will hold these each Wednesday evening (starting May 27th) from 6:30 until 7:30 PM. I look forward to more fruitful conversations like the one we had last night. The ONLY thing I ask, is that if you want to engage us, you please keep the conversation civil. That does not mean you can’t be upset or angry, (I actually have thick skin and can take it). It doesn’t mean you have to like what you hear. It certainly doesn’t mean you have to agree. It just means that we treat each other with respect, despite whatever differences we may have. I will promise that to you from my end, and I would hope that any who come to engage us would also adhere to that same common courtesy. Let’s leave all the nasty vitriol for social media. So, here is the login info: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87447455393> You can click on the link, or enter the following into the place on Zoom where it asks for the **Meeting ID: 874 4745 5393**. We will use the same Zoom meeting ID number each week, so you can take this and file it away (if you lose it you can also find it under the Mayor’s page of the City of Leavenworth’s web site).

As I transition to this, I will also be slowing down the number of community emails. I will continue to write these at least two or three times a week, but no longer will I be trying to write them daily. I will definitely try to keep you informed when there are changes being made, and to inform you of why something is happening. Stay safe! Stay well! Wear that mask!



Carl J. Florea, Mayor

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