



Mayor's Monthly Newsletter

Written by Mayor Andrew Mitcham

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Mayors Newsletter February 2020

Hello Friends & Neighbors,

January was an unusually busy month for me as Mayor. I attended no less than 10 events in my official capacity. Not included on that list but just as important was a Facebook Live event I hosted on my page answering questions about our new City Hall. In preparing for the event, I spent a week combing through 20 years of meeting agendas, citizen committee reports, and budgets. I also spoke with a former mayor, Steve Schneider, to learn more about a bond package from 2002.

Mayor Schneider and I had a great conversation and I enjoyed hearing about the challenges our City faced during his tenure—water supply issues, flooding, preserving green space, crime, fire/EMS services, annexation, revenue sources, etc. Many of these challenges we are still dealing with today. My research and conversations left me with a deep appreciation for all the mayors, councils, and citizen board/committee members who came before me. Their hard work made Jersey Village the gem it is today and set the foundation for our journey ahead.

Wherever these challenges land on your priority list, one common factor that ties them all together is funding. It's no shock to any of you reading this that services and infrastructure not only cost money to implement, but also cost more money every year to maintain and improve. For example, since I arrived on City Council in 2015, we have increased funding of the Fire Department by 31% and the Police Department by 51%, a rate far higher than inflation. We must continue to meet these funding obligations going forward.

Much of the burden for funding these increasing costs falls on us, the citizens, through various taxes and fees. When I arrived on City Council in 2015, property taxes comprised about 44% of our General Fund revenue. I'm proud to say that number is projected to fall to 37% this fiscal year. There are 2 main factors contributing to this drop. First, since 2015, our Sales Tax revenue has jumped an astonishing 87% from \$3.25M to \$6.08M thanks in-part to economic development policies that have attracted new employers and businesses. Second, your City Council approved increases in property tax exemptions last year that dropped total taxable residential value from \$477M in 2016 to \$472M in 2019. Council hopes to enact even more exemption increases this year as we assess their impact.

It is imperative that we, as a City, cultivate revenue growth to cover the increasing costs of services we love and projects citizen committees have recommended, all while providing more property tax relief for our homeowners. This seems like a near impossible goal, but the numbers prove Council's economic development policies have been highly effective in this effort. Continued growth requires more work to be done. Developing Village Center, along Jones Road south of Highway 290, is a key component of our effort to stay ahead of the curve.

Myself, Council, our City Manager, and our development partner, Collaborate, meet regularly as we work to set the tone for land use in this area and the rest of the ETJ, which makes up over 270 acres of land upstream of our City's main residential area. Going above and beyond simple detention ponds, the development preserves acres of wetlands, open green spaces, and large trees while adding trails and public gathering spaces. These important components of the plan hope to curtail the status quo that permeates our region and that we should no longer settle for.

Thank you all so much for your support and trust as we navigate the many challenges ahead of us.

Best Wishes,

Andrew Mitcham
Mayor
Jersey Village