

MAYOR'S NEWLETTER
NOVEMBER 2008

I spent several days last week at the Texas Municipal League (TML) annual conference with elected officials from virtually every city in Texas. One interesting thing to note is that there are several thousand towns across Texas, most of which make Jersey Village look big by comparison. I can also tell you that Jersey Village has fewer problems and is run better than most other towns.

At this conference, I learned that other towns have problems and opportunities similar to those in Jersey Village, and, more importantly, heard what they are doing to address those issues. Like Jersey Village, other towns need to deliver essential services, water, sewer and trash pick-up. They have fire, EMS and police departments; they have streets and parks. The bigger cities have libraries, parks, airports and golf courses. All the elected officials had common concerns in trying to balance the needs and demands of their constituents with the resources available.

One of the best seminars I attended was "Eight Indisputable Behaviors of Best Practice City Councils." It was about the behaviors of high achieving elected officials and an analysis of dealing with the city's citizens. The seminar leaders wanted elected officials to distinguish between who are the "owners" and who are the "customers." Like any other job, there are people who own the city and people who do business with the city. Clearly the people who live in the city and all property owners are the owners. Since elected officials are put in office by the owners to serve the city, they must treat them well and respond to their demands.

Customers of the city are also important, but their demands are centered on their individual needs and not on the city as a whole. Most residents are both owners (they pay taxes and own property) and customers (they buy water, police protection and other services). The point of the seminar was to help elected officials differentiate between an owner and a customer when interacting with the citizens, so they can use good judgment and make good decisions.

I also attended a seminar titled "The Role of Economic Development Incentives" about partnering with the State of Texas for economic development. In its budget, the state has no-cost funds available for cities to use as incentives for economic development. The funds have different purposes, but all are to be used to make cities better by creating new jobs, adding construction projects and making the city more attractive to both residents and those who live nearby. Although Jersey Village is mostly built out, there are still undeveloped and underdeveloped properties that may be waiting for the right opportunity to build.

Another great seminar was about making a vision for your city. I will explain this further in another letter and ask for your thoughts on your vision for Jersey Village.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam W. Hensley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping tail at the end.