

State of the Town Council Meeting 12/20/18

Larkspur Town Government 2007 – present

At the last Council meeting on December 6th, the Town Council was unceremoniously attacked by a Town resident demanding that the Council make a motion to eliminate the position of Deputy Town Manger and remove the person occupying the position.

This demand was apparently based on the premise that the Town of Larkspur with a population of 203 does not need and cannot justify having two managers with the argument that the salary for the position could be better spent for other Town needs. The argument was also made that the Town was overstaffed, and salaries being paid were more than the Town could afford.

To show support for his position, this resident brought approximately 10-12 other Town residents with him, some of whom signed up to speak under unscheduled public appearances but later recanted when the Council indicated they would consider this demand at a special public workshop on January 10th.

The resident making the demand was certainly within his rights to question the need for the position, however, without understanding its basis and the timing for hiring the incumbent, to demand immediate action was inappropriate and ill advised. Fortunately, the Council was not bullied into making an immediate decision and agreed to hold a workshop to discuss the matter.

That said, I would like to know what ideas and suggestions that Town resident has to maintain current services, make the Town better, to improve the Town for the future, and help solve the problems and issues facing the Town on a daily basis.

Accordingly, I would like you to understand how and why the Town has evolved to where it is today.

I was hired by the Town of Larkspur 11 years and 9 months ago with the express purpose of providing financial recovery and stability and professional management to the Town's administration. I accepted the position of Town Clerk/Manager at a salary well below the governmental standard for comparable positions, without supplemental benefits (health and life insurance, retirement, etc.), and having been told of Larkspurs reputation in Douglas County as being undisciplined and not having a clue of how a government should operate. I was also told by a former employee that I would not last six months in the job. I considered these negatives as a challenge with an opportunity to turn things around and help Larkspur regain a credible standing and respectable reputation.

The Town was in a debt crisis and had to obtain a line of credit to pay the salaries of its three employees. The Town was being micromanaged with little discipline by the Town Council which created out of control spending, virtually no efforts to seek collaboration with other agencies, and no plan for the future. Working with the Mayor, the Town's Accounting

Technician, and the contract accountant, we developed a financial plan to reduce costs, increase revenues, and obtain grant funding.

Over the next five years we continued to develop the plan to grow revenues while holding the line on spending and still maintain all the Town services to residents with no increase in fees.

The Town Park consisted of a small pre-school size playground on the east side of an open field of weeds, prairie grass, and thistles, a small sandlot ball field, and a basketball court. In order to help increase sales tax revenues from local businesses it was necessary to increase the customer base for the businesses and by building more and better recreational opportunities for families in Town, more people would be using those businesses.

Upon applying for and receiving three successive grants from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and one grant from the Gates Foundation, plans to build a park were made which included picnic shelters, volleyball court, regulation sized ball field, and school age/adult size playground, along with groomed grass areas and a parking lot which could be used for park events as well as overflow parking for the businesses across the street. The project was structured in five phases to allow for managed funding and not impact other Town services. Additionally, permanent restroom buildings and an assortment of trees were acquired from the closed CDOT rest areas on I-25 with the only cost to the Town for moving them to the Park. We acquired one 4-unit concrete building and six 2-unit wooden buildings of which one was kept for the Town Park and the remaining five sold to neighboring communities to defray the Town's cost to have them moved. This project was completed on schedule and below budget. The new park had its official grand opening on June 1, 2013. Gradually, new trees and park benches have been added to enhance the park experience and we are planning to add additional recreational facilities such as pickle ball courts, tennis courts, and an entertainment pavilion.

In order to provide varied recreation for park users, the Town saw fit to partner with several local non-profit organizations including the Larkspur Volunteer Fire Auxiliary (LVFA) and the Larkspur Area Chamber of Commerce. The Music in the Park nights, annual tree lighting, and annual Arts and Craft festival are samples of the events being offered.

The Bear View Jellystone campground was annexed to the Town on December 17, 2009 adding revenue with no increase in new expenses to the Town. This annexation was approved by the Town Council overriding the Planning Commission's recommendation AGAINST the annexation. Shortly thereafter the majority of Planning Commissioners resigned, and the Town Council chose to assume responsibility for performing future PC functions.

Also, in 2009 the water and sewer board disbanded after being unsuccessful in securing funding for a new well which the Town's water and sewer operator and water engineer stated was urgently needed to replace or supplement the existing wells which were deteriorating and could cease producing water at any time.

Following the demise of the water and sewer board in 2009, the Town Council, upon the urging of the Town's engineers and water operator, commissioned an independent assessment of the Town's two wells. Highline Engineering and Surveying and Hydro Resources were hired to take videos of the wells and analyze the results. A report was generated in November 2012 and a presentation made to the Council recommending IMMEDIATE ACTION be taken to drill a new well. It was also determined that high radium and manganese elements were in the water and removal or reduction was recommended through water treatment. By direction of the Council a project plan was formulated by Town staff to include not only a new well and water treatment plant but also a new water storage tank, new water distribution lines and a water line loop connection to better control water flow and manage outages. This project was separated into five phases to save money and allow for managed funding and better project management. Water rates were nominally increased to meet State and Federal requirements for obtaining funding from grants and loans from these agencies. As a result, and when the water treatment plant comes on line and is fully operational, the Town will have improved water quality and an assurance of a substantial water reserve. **Water rates and operational costs for these new facilities may increase pending the outcome of a new rate study which is currently underway.** It should be noted that the Town has been subsidizing residential water and sewer rates from the general fund for over twenty years. Our goal is to keep rates affordable but not at the current 20th century levels when expenses are rising and continue to increase at 21st century levels.

As background for this Council and the public, I have itemized a list of actions taken by staff and Town Councils over the past eleven years to improve Town services, to provide more recreational opportunities, and most importantly, to build a solid financial and economic base.

Following are two lists of accomplishments which this and preceding Councils can take pride in. The lists are separated by years in which there was very little development infrastructure work and when new major developments and town projects were started.

Accomplishments 2007-2013

- Stabilized the budget and developed a positive cash position taking Town out of "red" status
- Obtained grant funding to build new park and ball field
- Built new Town Park and Ball Field
- Received Colorado Lottery Starburst Award for outstanding fiscal management of lottery grant funds in building the Town Park
- New Park and Ball Field increased customers for Town businesses resulting in increased sales tax revenue
- Partnered with the Larkspur Area Chamber of Commerce to sponsor annual Arts and Crafts Festival and Settler Days

- Completed curb and gutter drainage project on southwest corner of Perry Park Avenue and Spruce Mountain Road
- Established lodging tax
- Annexed Jellystone campground thereby adding lodging tax and increasing tax revenue
- Became an active member of relevant County and State organizations, i.e. Partnership of Douglas County Governments, Economic Development Forum, Youth Initiative, Housing Partnership, Senior Council, County Planning Directors, etc.
- Established credibility with State and Federal Agencies, including CDPHE, Tri-County Health, GOCO, Department of Agriculture, Chatfield Water Authority, etc.
- Provided basic infrastructure services and maintenance for water, sewer, roads, public property including the town park, etc. at low cost to town residents
- Resurfaced Spruce Mountain Road, both north and south sides of Town
- Provided “Free” trash service for Town residents after initial access card fee of \$10
- Provided basic administrative services for accounting, business/sales tax and liquor licensing, files and records management, legal matters, responding to public, etc.
- Began planning for replacement of and supplementing Town water wells and performing water treatment to meet State and Federally mandated water quality standards
- Obtained grant and loan funding for beginning phases of the new water system project
- Hired Administrative Assistant to identify, correct, and update incomplete files and manage records
- Received positive reports on the Towns financial condition and financial management from independent auditors for each year’s annual audit

These actions were successfully completed with a full-time staff of four and one part time clerk working with a part time Mayor and using contract support for Accounting, Finance, Road Maintenance, Engineering, Public Works, and Planning. Additionally, Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) were in place with Douglas County for Building Department Services and Law Enforcement. It should be noted that the County retained 100% of fees charged for providing these services.

Volunteer Boards (Planning Commission, Water and Sewer, Economic Development, etc.) were also in place until 2009 when board members terms expired, and new volunteers could not be found. However new Parks and Recreation Board volunteers came forward and were appointed in 2009.

Accomplishments 2014-present

- Renegotiated agreement with the Colorado Renaissance Festival to remain in Larkspur through 2028
- Strengthened financial base for Town establishing budget reserves, increasing sales tax revenues, and developing and maintaining a one and one half million-dollar positive cash position
- Completed acquisition of property and/or right of ways for construction of upgraded Town water system including new well, new water storage tank, new pipelines, and new water treatment plant
- Completed construction of new well
- Completed construction of new 461,000-gallon water tank
- Completed construction of new pipelines to connect the new well and new water storage tank to the Town water system
- Completed a pilot study for removal of radium from water as mandated by CDPHE
- Obtained grant and low interest loan funding to complete new water system project
- Began construction of new water treatment plant and south loop extension to the water distribution lines (This project is scheduled for completion in April 2019)
- Completed groundwater monitoring study for CDPHE addressing the non-compliance issue of meeting State standards for treated waste water discharge
- Worked with new owners of the Jellystone campground to reach an agreement for expansion which, when completed will generate substantial additional lodging and sales tax revenue
- Continue working with the developer of the new Larkspur Travel Center to build and operate new businesses which will generate additional revenue, provide new job opportunities, and offer new dining experiences for residents
- Successfully worked with the Travel Center developer and State and Federal agencies to address environmental issues and obtain required permits
- Acquired additional land from the Larkspur Fire Protection District to expand the Town Park and add new recreational facilities
- Developed plans for adding new Pickle Ball and Tennis Courts to the Park amenities and seek funding to build them
- Completed construction of a trailhead connecting the southern end of the Larkspur Plum Creek trail to the Douglas County trail south of Town

- Upon acquiring necessary land parcels from two property owners, completed construction of the Larkspur Plum Creek trail from the southeast end of Community Park to Upper Lake Gulch Road
- Working with Douglas County open space, acquired bridge across Plum Creek to connect the Town's north trail segment to the County's trail at the I25 overpass at no cost to the Town
- Completed curb and gutter drainage project on east side of Spruce Mountain Road between Plum Creek Avenue and Charritos driveway
- Completed GPS mapping of entire Town
- Started Music in the Park series with three events in 2017 and doubled the events to six in 2018
- Contracted with Safe Built, Inc. for Building Department and construction inspection services
- Established Town Building Department to administer building and permitting services to improve response times and receive a percentage of fees
- Replaced accounting, finance, and grant writing contract support with two full time and two part time in-house staff
- Performed project management for multiple development and in-house projects
- Performed management oversight of developers and Town engineers
- Continued to provide "Free" trash service for Town residents
- Continued to provide basic administrative services for accounting, business/sales tax and liquor licensing, files and records management, legal matters, responding to public, etc.
- Continued active membership role with relevant County and State organizations, i.e. Partnership of Douglas County Governments, Economic Development Forum, Youth Initiative, Housing Partnership, Senior Council, County Planning Directors, etc.
- Continued coordination and participation with State and Federal Agencies, including CDPHE, Tri-County Health, GOCO, Department of Agriculture, Chatfield Water Authority, etc.
- Continued to provide basic infrastructure services and maintenance for water, sewer, roads, public property including town park, etc. at low cost to town residents

As you all know, the budget, approved for 2019, contained salaries for all positions presented to the Council at the budget workshops held on 8-23-18 and 10-25-18. The need for these positions was explained and were discussed with justification for each well defined. The funding for salaries was discussed and it was clearly noted that the salary levels for each was well below

industry standards for comparable positions. It was also noted that the Town offers no health, subsistence, or retirement benefits making finding qualified candidates willing to work for less pay without benefits and driving to and from Larkspur very difficult.

The current staffing level and positions is based on what services are being provided to support the Town operationally, economically, and recreationally, NOT on the number of residents being served.

You should ask yourselves these questions:

- Is current staffing wasting the Town's money or investing in the future?
- Do the residents want economic growth and prosperity or do they want to return to how it was 12 years ago when the Town was on the verge of insolvency?
- How is having this position affecting the Town negatively?
- How will taking this action affect the Town residents?
- How will eliminating this position benefit the Town?
- Will taking this action be in the best interest of the Town?
- What is the motive/objective of the resident proposing the action?
- What is the rationale behind the request for this action?

My goal, with the help of forward-thinking Councils, has always been to create a solid financial base for Larkspur and provide something that will last for future generations to enjoy and benefit from.

Your goal, as elected officials, should be to serve your constituents in a fiscally responsible manner while continuing to build a solid foundation for the future.

THAT SAID, THE STATE OF THE TOWN IS HEALTHY AND STRONG AND WITH YOUR SUPPORT WILL REMAIN THAT WAY!

YOU DECIDE!

I am turning 81 tomorrow and realizing my age, health, fitness, and willingness to work as a public servant can affect how much longer I am able to work and perform the duties of my position to MY satisfaction. Accordingly, I informed the Town Council in 2017 of the need to begin "succession planning" and seek to recruit my successor. That opportunity became reality when the right person with the right background and the wherewithal to work for much less than normal compensation presented itself.

THANK YOU!!