



Cottonwood Heights

Weekly Update for the Week of Sept. 12-16, 2016

The office is getting more orderly every day and we are falling back into the routine of our regular tasks after a fantastic move. Some of our staff and elected officials attended the 2016 Utah League of Cities and Towns Annual Convention last week in downtown Salt Lake where we were able to attend sessions on a variety of subjects ranging from community planning, transportation, and many other useful information.

In addition to the updates from our individual departments, I've included a letter that Mayor John Curtis of Provo recently wrote to his citizens and the residents of Utah. His words are worth contemplating how we individually influence the dialogue in our community and state.

City Manager

1. Submitted all content for October newsletter to designer. Should have a proof for council members by Tuesday's meeting.
2. Worked with AV team to train on new equipment for city council chambers
3. Finishing time lapse video in preparation for open house/ribbon cutting. Also completing media packet for same.
4. Trying to locate affordable, feasible options for software needed for the lobby display monitors. Having some difficulty getting answers from some that were recommended by the contractor. Hope to have this cleared up by Tuesday, so we can select one and get it installed in time for the open house/ribbon cutting.

Administrative Services

1. Bark in the Park was a successful event thanks to the great volunteers we have in the city; Jamie Jackson, Kris Monty, Andrea Bennett, and Youth City Council. Hundreds of patrons came out with their dog to enjoy the splash pad, vendors and k9 obstacles. I want to say thanks to the Cottonwood Heights Police K9 team for building the obstacle course and their support. The patron's and their dogs enjoyed being able to try out the course. Let's not forget the support from the Public Works Department I couldn't have don't the event without them!

Police

1. Chief Russo will be at the legislature Wednesday morning to testify on the Narcan program.

Public Works

1. Staff assisting with the City Hall move and ensuring that the furniture gets to the right location.
2. The 10 wheel dump truck arrived from Washington State.
3. Work at the public work site underway for utilities. Temporary power has been run to the job trailers.

Community Development

1. Cottonwood Heights has earned recognition as a “Utah Governor’s Business Friendly Community.” This distinction is given by Governor Herbert to cities that look for ways to streamline their regulations and to continue efforts to promote the best business climate available. The award will be given at the Utah League of Cities and Towns annual conference.
2. Mike Johnson will be taking over for Glen Goins, Senior Planner in the Planning Department. Glen accepted another position in another city and has left. Mike has been with the City for the last 5 years, starting out as a planning intern, then Associate Planner and lastly, Planner. Mike is one of those exceptional people you get the chance to work with that makes a difference everyday in the workplace. Congratulations, Mike. The City is currently reviewing applications for a new Associate Planner.
3. The Bites in the Heights voting is complete! Best Overall Award: Johnniebeefs; Best Service: Market Street Grill; Best Deal: Carl’s Café. Thanks to all the city employees and officials who visited restaurants during this first event. We hope to bring it back next year bigger and better!
4. The department is holding discussions with several groups in preparation for applying for several grants to bring improvements to the city.
5. We are partnering with BYU to do a study along Wasatch Boulevard as UDOT prepares to widen that corridor. The BYU students will conduct a survey of residents living in that area and get us feedback from those residents as we plan for the future.

Pictures



Figure 1 - Thanks to our many vendors that supported the Bark in the Park



Figure 2 - The K9 demonstration was exciting and fun



Figure 3 - Citizens give their own dogs a try on the K9 course

OPEN LETTER TO PROVO AND UTAH RESIDENTS

Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me. Did your mother teach you this also? Did you grow up believing in this motto like it was an all-powerful shield against bullies and trolls? All my life I walked around with at least some sense of confidence that words couldn't hurt me.

*I'm rubber, you're glue; Whatever you say
bounces off me; and sticks to you.*

For the seven years I've been mayor I have certainly had my fair share of complaints. I've read some heated emails. I've been called a plethora of names (believe me, I understand that comes with the job) but for most of the time I have been blessed to be the recipient of kindness and goodwill. Even in the face of strong disagreement we have come together with civility to work out our differences.

But recently I have noticed that the tide seems to be turning in public dialogue. Like a sewer leak deep beneath the surface, I feel a coarseness invading so many aspects of our lives. Even in our safe haven of Provo – a place known around the world for its kindness and concern of others.

For example, recently I received an email message from a citizen that ended with this line: "please ... let [this] be the issue that sinks the mayor and his ... awful arrogant deputy. Oh please oh please let them both be stripped of their clothing and carried out of the building ..."

Similar to this email, in the last month I've heard accusations and disparaging comments of a very different nature than previous public dialogue. Engagement on all platforms—from social media to civic meetings are more sarcastic, biting, impatient, rude, aggressive and often all too personal. In the years of being mayor, I can strongly say this surge of negativity is not normal for our community.

So what's going on?

I believe a majority of this comes from top down. Much of it has to do with the trickle-down effect of the conversation happening on the national stage. As we listen to those who have platforms as presidential candidates, we hear them use words that tend to be more cutting, more personal, more filled with spite.

The disparaging remarks in our own community are echoes of what we hear every single time we turn on the news, read the paper, or scroll through our Twitter timelines. It's almost always there when we engage in a presidential discussion. Name-calling, bigotry, hate, attacks. The leaders on our national stage insist on using more and more syllables to pollute the air with words that incite, provoke and demean.

Not only do we need to worry about Supreme Court nominations, the economy and war, we now need to worry about the impact of negativity. From what I'm seeing in the community it's as if the two candidates from the major political parties have issued us all a license to be rude without the thought of consequence.

I'm personally calling on our national leaders to understand how their contaminated actions and words seep into our local constituencies and how much we suffer because of it. I'm calling for a more civil discussion on issues like health care, immigration, national security, and jobs. We need them to take responsibility for changing the public discourse not only nationally but everywhere—in our states, cities, and homes.

I also call upon my fellow local elected leaders and residents to be that voice of civility. As a county, state, and community, we need more unity and less divide.

If we can't expect decency from the top – let's start it from the bottom.

Despite what our well-intentioned mothers taught us, words do hurt. They hurt all of us. Although I've experienced years of decent discourse I worry those days are over. We have a lot to lose in this election, let's not lose our hearts as well.

John Curtis – Provo City Mayor