

Manchester Message column, February 2022

Mike Clement

A New Year

Happy New Year! I know you'll be reading this in early February. By then, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day will be distant memories. Still, I wish you and yours, and all of us a happy and healthy new year!

Good-bye Carl. Last year ended on a very sad note for the community and me with the passing of Ward 1 Alderman, Carl Hudson. Carl was elected as alderman in April of 2021. While he was a lifelong resident of Manchester, he was new to City government. Prior to his deciding to run for office, I didn't know him. To help him with familiarizing to his new elected role, we met on several Saturday mornings last year. We talked about Manchester things: meeting protocols, City vision and initiatives, City and ward matters. While we talked plenty about Manchester, our conversations often migrated to the challenges of high school youth. Carl was Assistant Principal at Marquette High School. From that position, he saw the best and, sometimes, the worst in our young adults. He held all young people in high esteem, though, and tried to know all their names! Many Marquette youth viewed Carl as a trusted counselor; an admired role model. Marquette and Manchester will miss Carl!

I was out-of-town for Alderman Hudson's funeral but watched it streaming live from his church. As I watched and heard the eulogists describe Carl, I realized that there was much that I didn't know about Carl. Our time together had been too short. And, realizing that, I felt like I had missed out on something important. Carl's life entailed much more than being a school administrator and elected representative. He also impacted lives through pastoring, preaching and building relationships based on caring. Carl was quite a special person.

Lessening the Distance. Reflecting on a really good person's life that I hadn't gotten to know fully, reminds me of the importance of the phrase that I use, and need to more fully practice myself, "Lessening the distance." That phrase simply means we need to make the effort to know our neighbors more fully. Knowing those around us and valuing our similarities, as well as differences, strengthens our unity and trust with those we live, whether it's on our street, or amongst the entire community. An awareness and appreciation for others creates a feeling of belonging. That sense of belonging is a key building block for strong, healthy neighborhoods.

Last year, I was part of a facilitated book study that read Peter Block's book, *Community, The Structure of Belonging*. While the book is thirteen years old, Block certainly makes points that are as relevant today as they were in 2008. Its theme is relevant and important enough that the City will use the same book this year for a shorter series of discussions with a dozen or more City staff.

ManchesterCares--a new non-profit. On the topic of knowing and valuing our community's needs, a goal of the city has been to build a non-profit that can help a resident or family that is facing short-term, financial hardship. This dream of a non-profit capable of helping our residents arose several years ago from a resident who has been patient and persistent. Thank-you Ms. A. for your dream!

The City Attorney has provided the legal framework for the non-profit and the Board of Aldermen approved a funding request last year. Other matters in 2021 regularly got in the way of its formation, though. It is a 2022 priority of the City (and mine) to form a small team that will be charged with envisioning the scope and purpose of the non-profit and write its by-laws. If you have ideas for the non-profit's purpose, please e-mail me.

New Hires. As last year ended, several key City positions were filled. In November, Interim City Administrator Justin Klocke was appointed the permanent City Administrator. In December, Errol Tate was hired as Public Works Director. In the same month, Todd Streiler assumed the position of Planning & Zoning Director and Michelle Melugin was promoted from Deputy City Clerk to City Clerk. We are a better City with these new hires. I think them for accepting these key roles.

Support Prop U at the April election. On the April ballot, there will be an issue (Proposition U) asking support for a local use tax on online purchases. This use tax would impose the same sales tax rate (1.25%) to online purchases as we currently pay to local retailers. The absence of online sales tax puts local businesses, particularly our small businesses, at a disadvantage with online retailers/vendors. Funds from the Use Tax would flow into the City's General Fund and be used to pay for municipal services. (See the related article on the cover of this issue.)

Not covered in this column are the City's big topics of: 1) New City Hall progress; 2) Annexation of the unincorporated area to the east of City limits and 3) Possible redevelopment of parts of the City. We will be discussing these topics all year long. To learn more, come join me at my next "Conversation with the Mayor" on Wednesday, March 9 at 7:30 a.m. (See related article.)

I began this column acknowledging the passing of Alderman Carl Hudson. The City also learned in August last year that former Ward 3 Alderman, Don Ryan had passed away on August 5. He and his wife had moved to Wentzville several years ago. He last served on the Board of Aldermen six or eight years ago. Our City appreciates his service. Good-bye Don.

I enjoy serving you as Mayor. It's an honor!

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