

Vice Mayor's Report

I am giving this special report because of some recent decisions by the mayor which have raised questions, stirred bewilderment, and created controversy in our community.

Mayor Dan, you have done a wonderful job as mayor for the last 12 years. To recite the many accomplishments of your tenure would take a chunk of time.

In your first years as Mayor, you – with fellow commissioners – cleaned up the Town government. The Town is better for it.

For those who didn't live through them, I will cite two projects that changed JIC for the better: the undergrounding of utilities and the Neighborhood Rehabilitation Project. Both have made the Town safer, more welcoming, more sustainable, and more desirable.

Partly because of your leadership, the town has been a thriving, warm and convivial community, where neighbors help neighbors and trust is implied.

You and I have been friends and allies — and sometimes sparring partners — for about 15 years. We have served on the Commission together with Dick Busto for the last 12 years. Your leadership in the Florida League of Cities helps JIC stay on top of trends and laws that impact us.

Most folks have no idea of the time and effort you have put into the office of mayor.

All that said, I raise an issue that is of concern to many in the community.

Our Town Charter states that, "The Mayor shall be the chief executive officer of the municipality and Chairman of the Commission and it shall be his duty to attend to the proper and effective enforcement of the laws and ordinances of the municipality, ***under the over-all supervision of the Commission.***"

That means that while the mayor is the CEO, the mayor operates with the advice of the Commission and that the Commission sets policies for the town to be respected by the mayor and passes ordinances that the Mayor/CEO enforces with the police and other designated persons, such as code enforcement.

The Commission has exerted supervision on important matters such as town finances, big projects such as the NRP, important contracts, and other major matters. Because of your effectiveness and the beneficial results for the town, the Commission has, by and large, not "supervised" the day-to-day, basic functions of town government.

However, on important hiring decisions, in the past, you have publicly consulted with the Commission. For example, when the Commission decided to hire a Town Administrator and

you and Chief Pruitt recommended Kevin Lucas, all the commissioners interviewed him and approved of his being hired.

Therefore, it was startling that without consulting the Commission, you hired two senior police officers at the time that Chief Pruitt was contemplating retirement. As well, you created new positions and structure for the Police Department without a discussion with the commission.

In my opinion, both were huge mistakes. I don't understand why you would have done so.

The reaction of many people in town has been shock and dismay, even among those of us who have been your friends and supporters.

So, I am making three major recommendations to the Commission:

One is that you do not hire or fire any town employees, including within the police department, without presenting a decision to the Commission for discussion and ratification.

Two is that all major decisions affecting the town's general welfare be brought to the Commission for discussion and ratification.

The third recommendation is that we consider a referendum to change the Charter to a Town Manager form of government.

We have discussed hiring a Town Manager in Commission meetings for years, knowing that no mayor before you, and almost certainly, no mayor after you, will devote the time and effort to the job that you have done.

We have a municipality with all the obligations and responsibilities mandated by the Federal, State and County governments. Our volunteer Commission will require expertise and a full-time presence in Town Hall to meet those responsibilities and obligations.

I believe that JIC residents wish to continue being a Town. We all know that managing a Florida municipality is becoming increasingly complex, and that you and a future mayor and commissioners will need a professional manager to fulfill all the statutory and other requirements of being a municipality.

I had intended to call for a vote by the Commission on these three matters after discussion. However, Florida's Sunshine Laws require one week notification in advance of a meeting if critical motions are to be placed on the agenda for a vote.

So, I am requesting that the following 3 motions be placed on the agenda for the June 12 meeting:

Motion1: That the mayor shall not hire or fire any town employees, including within the police department, without presenting a decision to the Commission for discussion and ratification.

Motion2: That all major decisions affecting the town's welfare be brought to the Commission for discussion and ratification.

Motion3: That we request that Bill Doney present to the Commission the procedures for adopting a Town Manager form of government for consideration as soon as possible.