

Dear Residents of DuPont,

Deputy Mayor Roger Westman passed along that I should communicate with you the old fashioned way, by writing. A great suggestion, because not everyone uses Facebook or the web. We all get a water bill, though, so I am going to begin using this venue to let you know about important community issues. There are a few important votes the City Council will be taking later this month and I want to share some thoughts and facts with you about two topics they are considering: the ACE Hardware/storage project, and the 2017 budget.

The Council is considering a text amendment to our zoning code on 22 November that would allow for the building of an ACE Hardware and garden center, and retail packing and office supplies on the first floor with storage on floors 2 and 3 on the vacant lot at the corner of Center and McNeil. The amendment does NOT invalidate or waive all the other protections we have as a community relative to what the design standards are, what type of retail goes on the first floor or even what it would generally look like. The lot is unique in that the sewer system does not support a commercial kitchen. This means that several allowed uses like grocery stores (bakery, prepared food), restaurants, churches, etc. that the community may desire become pragmatically difficult or impossible. The ACE is in the 8000 sq ft range with a 2000 sq ft garden center, the supplies store would be somewhere between 1500-2000 sq ft. One of the biggest complaints I hear from residents is a lack of retail in the City. Although not vocalized as often, we lack storage as well. Our one storage facility is running at or near capacity (the available units tend to be the smaller sizes). The development of the project, as proposed, will fill two essential needs in our community. This project will also bring a significant source of revenue (property tax, B&O tax and sales tax) to the City. Currently, laws allow for all types of retail and services except for adult businesses, auto repair, bulk fuel distribution, wrecking yards, warehouses, drive-thrus and related activities on that lot. A second potential developer has already begun to inquire about permitting to build a new gas station should the text amendment fail; that we would have to allow. The internal storage and ACE hardware better serve our community, so I am urging the Council to support this project. We need stores and services that serve us, not travelers on I-5. You can make your feelings known at the 8 November public hearing beginning at 6 PM.

The Council is also considering our 2017 City Budget. There are two specific items I am proposing that deserve your attention:

1. I have asked the Council to put \$100,000 in Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) aside for a Community Center Feasibility and Design Study. Our current community center is inadequate to support DuPont properly. It is time to consider building a new one on the City lot adjacent to the Civic Center and move away from a mentality of "making do" when it comes to quality of life. A new community center will be a long community process with plenty of stops along the way to provide you and Council the ability to decide whether to proceed or halt. In this way, we won't overcommit or overspend. It begins with a professional survey asking YOU if we want a new community center and what you would want in it. Only if the survey results suggest we move forward, would I ask the Council to release the funds. If we do a study and develop a design, the Council would then decide whether to ask you by way of a vote if we should build it. Then and only then, YOU would have the opportunity to decide what happens. By approving my request, the Council only commits to allowing the process to begin, not to spending \$100,000 without good reason. If a community center is not in the cards, we still have the \$100,000.
2. The City owns a home on Shaw St. on Hoffman Hill that was originally built as a Public Safety Annex through Fire Mitigation by the developer. It was never built with many of the required safety and operational upgrades because it was only a bridge facility between the old and new stations. Since then, the Civic Center was built and the Shaw St house no longer meets the current or projected needs of the City. Future expansion requiring a Fire Annex would be built with proper requirements and would be paid for with new Fire Mitigation fees. I am recommending we sell this house and use half the proceeds to meet Council Financial Policies that call for us to build our reserve funds, with the other half going toward deferred maintenance on other city property, refurbishing the Clocktower being foremost.

A lot of information, I know, but I felt it was important to make sure you knew these subjects were in the works and pass along some facts. As I said before, you can expect a (shorter) note in upcoming bills.

Sincerely,



Mayor Mike Courts