

Seems to me, that Surprise has hit its stride. Just last week we added yet another manufacturer, Tacoma Box Company to our growing industrial park, and broke ground for a 2,200 home neighborhood with a Jack Nicklaus designed golf course, framing the stunning panorama of the White Tanks.

Toll Brothers marks our entry in the executive housing market and I believe will give us the momentum needed to bring in destination retail and executive wage jobs, not only on the 303 corridor, but in our future downtown. I want to thank the Council for seeing the wisdom in dreaming big.

So if I may, I would like to reflect on a few more turning points for our city.

Of all the things we've done as a City Council...and we've done a lot....

A few stand out.

First among them is restoring fiscal integrity to our city.... it goes without saying, without it, we have no credibility as an organization. And together, we gave our city a second chance... to be better.

But while we may have identified the root causes of our fiscal crisis, and developed a Council strategic plan to move our city forward, we needed the type of management leadership that would re-create a culture of service within our ranks.

Bob Wingenroth was clearly the perfect choice. I sometimes think Bob sees himself as just a numbers geek. While we had to coax him from his role leading our finance department, his people skills were clearly needed throughout the organization.

Bob thought long and hard about taking the City Manager job. But he took it, on one condition... that we as a council, support his servant leadership management style.

Thankfully we found consensus on his request...and we still do.

Some of late, have suggested that we agree too much. I must emphatically disagree. Without Council consensus, the City is not growing, it's not innovating, it is simply rudderless as an organization.

Without Council consensus, we are not developing our workforce, attracting new businesses or universities to take a risk on us.

Without consensus, it is harder to risk a piece of ourselves on doing what's right.

A review of the minutes shows we rigorously debate items of controversy. But 99% of the time we are a unanimous council. I'm proud of that record. But it's a testament to Bob's heart as a servant leader, and his partnership with each of us that keeps us focused on what's best for Surprise.

When I first took office as Mayor, the Executive Director of the Maricopa Association of Governments asked how it felt to ride a bucking bronco. At first I resisted the comparison, but it wasn't long, before I knew what he meant. Our council was deeply divided, and our staff felt as if they were not receiving clear direction. That did not bode well for us.

The challenges we faced in Surprise a decade ago, were just another symptom of a broken American economy. The national mantra, even from government was to go out and spend to stimulate the economy.

But here in Surprise, few of those precious revenues were being plowed back into our local economy. Why? Because we were largely a bedroom community.

Our predecessors had long focused on building homes and branding Surprise as a value investment for young families starting out, and for retirees. We were a safe place to sleep. A nice idea, but impossible to sustain.

When 91 percent of our workforce is leaving town each day to go to work, they are also generating critical sustaining revenues somewhere else.

As a council, we were charged with an opportunity to lead Surprise to a better place. And when we see today's youth, we see tomorrows leaders wanting to make things better too!

Thru the Surprise Youth Council, youth internships and summer work programs, we have found lasting ways to connect with our community. And this next generation of leaders has not only energized us, but inspired us to focus.

So, in Surprise, our focus on education is no accident. It is education, and the opportunity to learn by wondering, by innovating, and by contributing that is literally driving our economic future, and defining our identity.

We invested in our old city hall, turning it into the "TechCelerator... where every day, an international collection of innovators are free to wonder and create solutions.

Several years ago, as a member of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, I travelled to Washington DC to meet with dignitaries from

foreign countries on how to attract foreign businesses to invest in Surprise. It was one such conversation in the German embassy that planted a seed about career technical education.

That seed, grew into a 19-acre facility on Grand Avenue, where careers needing technical skills are inspired and honed for the businesses who need them. We are proud that Westmec's flagship facility is located in Surprise.

Had we been divided as a city council, had we not intervened with a better plan, that property would have become a used car lot and a drive thru.

I cannot forget to mention how our Water Resources department partnered successfully with Gateway Community College to help build careers in water and wastewater management. These programs are hard to come by, but Surprise is on the leading edge. This initiative was proof of our staff's commitment to the council's vision to focus on education.

Surprise should be proud of our laser focus on education opportunities for our residents.

And surely nothing makes us prouder than the work we've done to make Surprise a college town.

I can think of no single initiative that does more to grow a sense of community, a sense of living a life of significance than nurturing the development of OUAZ in Surprise.

When you leave these chambers tonight, you may wander past the front door to city hall.

You may see Ottawa students gathering in the courtyard, or doing homework...even playing the guitar and singing songs together in the cafe.

Just beyond the entry, something amazing is happening. Just weeks ago, I, on behalf of the City, signed a long term land lease and partnership agreement with Ottawa.

Tonight, you can walk past Ottawa's football field, where they have just hosted their first exciting season of NCCAA sports, including football and soccer.

Behind the field, the walls of the new O'Dell Center for Athletics are almost complete. This 35,000 sq. ft facility will be shared with residents for the next 11 years thru our partnership agreement.

Walk across the courtyard, and you can imagine the new student union and the first phase of the on-site dormitories that are already under construction.

The partnerships we now enjoy with Ottawa, all started with a big dream... (one I shared with former council member John Williams who joins us tonight.)

It took building relationships with the City of Phoenix, with Luke Air Force Base Command, and with Senator McCain's office to make building this university possible. Our partnerships don't stop with the shared facilities here at city center, they extend to Dysart Unified School District, to CCV, Sun Health and so many more.

But this dream can only be fully realized if we continue to forge cooperative partnerships with the landowners at city center and the new businesses who have located in our nearby industrial park, along

the 303 employment corridor, at Luke Air Force Base and throughout the valley.

Yesterday, for example, we submitted our application to the Local Motors challenge to the Greater Phoenix and Sacramento communities, to partner in the emerging technology of autonomous vehicles. Our vision is to one day provide a local circulator not only to move this growing Ottawa student body, but to give a boost to tourism, and enhance our residents' mobility to and around our local business. Autonomous technology will be a game changer in transportation, and Surprise can be at the leading edge in partnership with Ottawa.

Finally, I know Bob is particularly excited that our employees now have the opportunity to complete a Master's Degree just 20 feet from their desk.

Ottawa is bringing its mission of living a life of significance to Surprise.

Every resident of this city, no matter your age, your education, or personal passion has an opportunity to be touched by this wonderful organization.

If you haven't yet found your way to be involved, I encourage you to get in the spirit! You won't regret it.

In short, these accomplishments could never be realized by a council that doesn't work together....and just as important.... without a world class staff that puts our policy initiatives into action.

So here we are, in the fall of 2018 facing another challenge. Just weeks ago, our dear friend Bob Wingenroth gave us notice that he intends to leave his post as our City Manager. In some cities, this

could be a crisis. But in Surprise, we quickly moved to elevate Mike Frazier to the position of City Manager.

That we were able to move with such confidence is yet another testament to the value of a City Council that is laser focused on a vision.

This wasn't necessarily in Mike's plans. But he too understands the promise of our city, and though it may put off a well planned retirement, he is excited about being a part of helping our Council put its vision into action. More importantly, he has the experience and qualifications to deliver.

I personally, am deeply indebted to you Bob, for your selfless service to this city, and grateful for your friendship and wise counsel...and for skillfully developing your team.

7 years ago, I stood in the well of this chamber and delivered my first state of the city address. At the time, the picture was rather grim. The 2012/2014 city council spent the next four years laying the policy groundwork for a strong economic recovery and building a strategic plan.

For the last 4 years it was Bob who instilled a passion to serve in our staff, and the confidence in their skills to deliver on our vision! As you leave us Bob, we are so grateful. We wish you all the best.

As I said at the beginning, it feels as if Surprise has hit her stride. The state of the city is well, fantastic!

What better time to hand the baton to a successor who can keep the momentum going?

And so it is with a sense of joy for all we've done together and in anticipation of all that I know is right around the corner, that tonight, I make my final report from this dais.

Tomorrow morning, I will be submitting a letter to the city clerk, notifying her of my intention to step off the stage as Mayor of Surprise.

After a great deal of thought, my decision comes at what I believe is both the right time for for me personally, but for the city.

Surprise has been my family for the past 16 years, and serving you has been my greatest honor.

But its time....

Time for me to restart a journey I began some 15 years ago when I first came to Surprise. And while I contemplate how I personally can build on the work we've done together, I urge the city to do the same. For all of you, Council and staff have made the city of Surprise better than you found it. It is up to you to build on that success.

I want to thank the citizens of Surprise for honoring me with this job.

I came here to take a little break from public life, to make new friends and just live life. I thank you for nudging me to take this detour....

It has been an amazing journey.... one I certainly wasn't expecting.

I have been blessed by your ongoing support...your kind words in the grocery store or the post office ...your contact with my office,

Your constructive critiques,

Your phone calls of encouragement...

and your sincere notes of thanks.

It is contact with you that has sustained me for over 8 years, as a member of this council.

As your Mayor, I committed to governing transparently and holding myself accountable to you. I committed not only to making Surprise whole, but better than I found it.

Across our nation, today is election day. It has been a long and somewhat grueling election season. But exciting to finally see this level of engagement.

Tonight, winners will be declared.

Tomorrow morning the 2018 election season will have passed.

It's time for us to roll up our sleeves and help our incoming colleagues, our newly appointed staff, and soon to be appointed Council leadership to learn the ropes.

And it is also time for us all to appeal to each other's better nature. Whether here in Surprise, or anywhere in this amazing country of ours, it is never too late to treat each other with love and respect.

We all have a chance to lead in our community...whether it's as an elected official, as a volunteer in our neighborhoods, or as a good listener to someone in personal pain.

We all should choose a life of significance, by making someone else's a little better.

That is the opportunity that public service has given me.

I have confidence in our city's future and in the stewardship of City Council and staff.

It is my highest hope, that this council will remain unified as you select my successor, for unity is what will best serve the city we all love.

In just a few short days, I'll be heading back to the path I had intended to travel, when Surprise first caught my eye.

I'm excited for those who have yet to find us.

But they will. And it will be an amazing.... Surprise.

God Bless you