

MAYOR'S NEWLETTER
SEPTEMBER 2008

While the most important job of an elected official is to approve the budget, set the tax rate and watch over the expenditures of the city, the hardest job is to determine the true consensus of the will and desires of the citizens. The consensus is the median, or average, of all the opinions of every citizen living in Jersey Village. While that definition of consensus almost assures an elected official that most people will not fully agree with his decisions, it is still the responsibility of citizens to voice their opinions to their elected officials.

This is similar to an experience I had in the course of refereeing basketball. One of my hobbies is refereeing high school basketball games where I am required to make instant decisions on a variety of infractions. I can assure you that most decisions, calls and non-calls, are met with vocal disagreement from some of the crowd. On more than one occasion, I have listened to a coach tell me that I had just made the worst call in the world; all I could tell him was, "the people on the other side of the court sure liked it."

And this brings us to code enforcement. I have explained in several other letters that City Council heard from numerous citizens regarding the need for code enforcement on numerous issues. Cars parked on grass, commercial and oversized vehicles parked in driveways, abandoned cars, trash piles and items stored in view of the street are objectionable to neighbors; those things look bad, degrade the quality of life, depress property values, and are generally a nuisance.

Lax enforcement of the City's codes didn't happen overnight, and clearing up these issues will take some time. First, someone parks an oversized vehicle in the driveway or lets their grass grow too long and gradually the problems multiply and become more severe. Outraged citizens complain and City Council has to make some decisions: Do we ignore the problems or correct them? Do we strictly enforce the codes or do we need new codes? How will we react to the anticipated push back from the offenders?

City Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission, city attorney and staff met for a workshop on September 2 to discuss these issues. City Council had passed a tighter vehicle parking ordinance on July 21 and wanted to make sure that the new ordinance was understood by individuals in all three groups. We also verified that the intent of the ordinance was what was written into words and everyone was clear on the definitions.

We went on to discuss other perceived blights on the city: recreational vehicles, boats, RV's, four wheelers, BBQ pits and outside storage of items that most of us would consider trash. If you have an opinion on these items and whether or not they are good for Jersey Village, share your thoughts with City Council members, the Planning and Zoning Commission members or me.

Don't forget; the public hearing on the 2008-9 budget will be held on Monday September 15 at City Hall. Russell Hamley