



Doing Our Part for Missouri's Municipalities

Every single day, in a myriad of ways, our lives are impacted by the work of local government. Many of us fail to realize that the street signs we adhere to, the sidewalks we walk, the businesses we frequent and the utilities we rely on are all a result of our municipal governments hard at work, 24/7, to make our communities better places to live. But they can't do it on their own. Reduced revenues and streamlined staffs are making municipalities more and more reliant on the contributions of their citizens. And why shouldn't they? Everyone who lives in a community is a beneficiary of its services and amenities, and can often be the first to tell you about its shortcomings. Who is more responsible for the well-being of a community than those who inhabit it?

As the Missouri Municipal League, an association of 660 cities across the state, of which we are a member, embarks upon its 75th anniversary, I am overwhelmed and encouraged by stories pouring in from across the state of Missouri of everyday citizens who are stepping up to solve issues of need in their communities. People like a pastor who used his church as a headquarters for a campaign to merge a struggling school district or the couple who began purchasing failing businesses to revive a struggling downtown center. How about the small business owner who started a group to support local artists in her town and began hosting events to highlight their work? These individuals identified an area of need and used the skills they possess to make a difference. Imagine the impact if everyone did the same.

Your local elected officials and the staff that supports them are the link between everyday citizens and state and national government. As leaders, we go to bat for our communities every day, advocating growth and progress for the areas we represent. The support of our residents makes this all the more fulfilling and successful. It produces a higher quality of life for all.

Citizens must *understand what local government does for them*. Many have a partial understanding, but some fail to realize the number of areas that local government impacts in a municipality. These areas include planning/zoning, economic development and tourism, public works (construction and maintenance of all city-owned or operated assets, including the water supply system, sewer, streets, storm water, snow removal, street cleaning, street signs, vehicles, buildings, land, etc.), parks and recreation, police and fire services, emergency medical services, emergency management, accounting and finance (often tax collection and audits), human resources for city workers, public transportation, legal counsel on municipal matters, information technology and housing.

To put it more plainly, you can't flush a toilet, relax in a park or turn on faucet without feeling the effects of your municipal government in your life.

After appreciation and understanding, the inevitable next step is *to find your place and get involved*. No community is without need and there is always an area where your skills, time and resources can be put to use. If you possess a skill or professional experience, donate free hours of your time toward helping the city in a given cause. And, we invite your participation on a city committee or your involvement as an elected official. The point is, instead of watching your local government officials, staff and employees hard at work all around you; find a way to lend a hand. A community is a reflection of its residents and when those who live there don't care about its wellbeing, it shows. But, time and time again, we have seen what can happen when citizens step up, unite with others and volunteer to help make a difference.

The time is now.

Mike Moss

Mayor

Steve Lawver

City Administrator