

# The Stehly Report

Fall 2017 Newsletter

## Sioux Falls City Council Update from Councilor Theresa Stehly

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Dear Fellow Citizens,

I know you all have busy lives, so I wanted to take this opportunity to reach out and update you on some of the happenings in our city government.

During these past months on the City Council, I have been working to

bring more transparency and openness to all areas of city government and to keep you engaged and informed about issues we are voting on. I believe that you, the taxpayers, have a right to know where your tax dollars are being spent, and your concerns deserve to be heard by the mayor and the City Council.

I am always mindful that we work for YOU the citizens, and your tax dollars support all functions of city services. I will continue to strive to bring accountability and efficiency into all the decisions and votes I make.

Whether it is more funding for streets, holding the line on water/sewer rate increases, or protecting basic services like snow removal and street cleaning, I will continue to put citizens first.

Never hesitate to reach out to me and my colleagues on the City Council with your concerns and comments. It is my hope that you will always be treated with respect and responsiveness by all city employees.

God Bless You,  
Theresa Stehly  
Sioux Falls City Councilor

## Argus Leader and Media Venues Step Up To Inform

These past 11 years I have been keeping a keen eye on the media coverage of City Council events. I have been very impressed with the quality of reporting that I have seen since I have been in office. *Argus Leader* reporters Joe Sneve, John Hult, Patrick Anderson, and Jonathan Ellis have been bringing issues like ambulance service, zoning ordinances, annexation, Park Board district representation, Event Center siding settlement terms and many other

topics to the citizens.

Also helping to inform the people on issues are Greg Belfrage and Jon Michaels at KELO AM 1320 and Patrick Lalley at KSOO AM 1000.

Our community is blessed to have 3 TV stations (KSFY, KELO, KDLT) that are crucial in keeping people up to date on city issues as well.

Government cannot police itself. In our growing community, we need great media coverage, now more than ever.

## Park Board Representation Ordinance

This summer, I proposed an ordinance that would mandate that the Park Board have a representative from each council district in addition to two at-large positions. This would resemble the representation we have in place in our City Council. Historically, the Park Board members have lived on the South end of Sioux Falls. Right now 4 of the 7 members live in the southeast district. As our community

grows, it will be beneficial for citizens to have a representative from their area of town to ensure that all parts of Sioux Falls have a place at the Park Board table, and to open up the discussion for new ideas and perspectives. The City Council voted on this August 8th. Those who supported it with a YES vote were: Theresa Stehly, Pat Starr, Marshall Selberg and Greg Neitzert.

Those who voted NO for

more representation: Christine Erickson, Rick Kiley, Rex Roling and Michelle Erpenbach. Mayor Mike Huether broke the tie and voted NO for more district representation.

I hope to bring this back again after the next election, with a new mayor and possibly 4 new council members. More responsive representation will be a wonderful policy for our citizens.

## Street Sweeping Beautifies City



Public Works Director Mark Cotter is striving to have our streets cleaned three times this season. I was able to do a ride along with the street sweeper. (They would not let me drive!!)

Follow me on Facebook to get the latest on City Events.  
[www.facebook.com/theresa.stehly](http://www.facebook.com/theresa.stehly)



Also read the *Argus Leader*, and *Southdacula.com* for information and editorial opinions.

### Problematic Mixed Use Parking Ramp Proposal

This project is back on the docket for a fall vote. Some of you may have followed this issue last spring when the *Argus Leader* printed an editorial supporting my concerns about this project. Here is the gist of it: The City is proposing that we spend around \$17 million for a mixed use parking ramp to provide only 200-300 new spaces downtown. Mixed into this structure is a partnership with Legacy Development to physically attach their private business venture to the taxpayer's parking structure. In addition, they want to use the second penny sales tax for collateral in the project in the

event that the parking fees would not cover the bond payment. I have several concerns with this:

1. **We need to identify who the investors are in this project.** The city has denied us the information. We have a right to know who we are doing business with in this Legacy deal. If we are marrying tax dollars to private development, all the players need to be revealed. Openness and transparency are the mandates here. I would be willing to see these names in an executive session if that is what it takes to vet this out for the public's protection.

2. **The cost for the public**

parking is too high. The estimated \$17 million price tag is too high of a cost for only 200-300 new parking spaces. We can provide the needed parking without wasting our city resources.

3. **We need to protect the 2nd penny.** We must not attach any more risk to our 2nd penny. We have already tied it to the Events Center debt, the new administration building debt, Lewis and Clark and a variety of other projects. Now we need to focus it toward rebuilding and maintaining our streets. It is not the time to put it in jeopardy.

If you have concerns about this project, as I do, please contact the City Council members and let them know NOW. The vote is coming soon.

### Lloyd Company Wants Tax Break of Estimated \$450,000 a Year

The City Council will be voting in the next few weeks whether to approve a TIF (Tax Increment Financing) for the \$43 million upscale apartment and mixed use development located along Philips to the Falls. This is a prime piece of property and there were 5 companies vying for this project. This TIF would 'forgive' the \$450,000 yearly property taxes generated by this development for 13-14 years for the Lloyd Company so the company can use that money for cleanup costs. (A total of

over \$4 MILLION.)

Especially during this time of dwindling sales tax revenue, there are concerns that this proposal is unfair to the citizens (homeowner or business owners) who are paying their fair share of property taxes. Some of them may be doing remediation work as well, but they don't get a break on their property tax. Some feel giving a tax break to a successful developer does not make sense. Please call the council and let them know how YOU feel about this. Do it now.

### Boulevard Gardening Ordinance



As some of you may know, I am a passionate flower gardener. I have taught gardening classes through the school district for many years, and my yard has been featured on the Master Gardening Tour on three occasions.

I love giving arrangements to those who are sick, discouraged or grieving. With the duties of City Councilor added to my work schedule it has been more challenging to attend to my flowers, but I am

happy to report that we now have a new ordinance on the books that is encouraging beautification in our boulevards. Flowers, rocks and mailboxes are allowed with certain limits. Please visit the city website at [Siouxfalls.org](http://Siouxfalls.org) for more details. Gardening is good for the soul and the environment.

**GARDEN TIP:** Fall is a great time to plant perennials. Many greenhouses are having closeout sales and tulips and daffodils are in plentiful supply.

### Sales Tax revenue down... City projecting 0% growth

The numbers have been steadily dropping for the sales tax revenue the city is collecting. We have been told that each department is cutting back by 5%. Funding for some nonprofits have been scaled back as well. For example, the Bishop Dudley House (a homeless shelter) is slated to have their funding cut in half from \$120,000 to \$60,000. Also, the funding for the Bowden Youth Center was cut from \$110,000 to \$84,250. Corporate subsidies will be effected as well. For example, the funding for Eco-

omic Development (Forward Sioux Falls, Sioux Falls Development Foundation and Chamber) will be reduced from \$675,000 to \$630,000.

It really comes down to what the Mayor thinks is important to fund. Unfortunately, the City Council doesn't have any real input into the budget until it is set in stone. There have been a few successes with amendments, but it is very difficult to accomplish. There is a perceived hesitancy to go against the administration and department heads. It would be won-

derful if future administrations would sit down with all City Council members early in the process, and ask for input for projects that would benefit the citizens. For instance, we could use our city vehicles longer before we purchase new ones. They are serviced on a regular basis, which can prolong the usability of a vehicle. I know many citizens are driving their own vehicles well past the 100,000 mile mark. The City could do this as well. I want citizens to know that I will always put a top priority on providing excellent basic services, and I will work to keep fees and taxes low.

### City Financial Facts

2018 City Budget:  
**\$457 million**

Total City Debt:  
**\$340 million**

Total Debt  
per man woman  
and child:  
**\$1,920**

Amount Mayor  
asked  
Department Heads  
to cut back: **5%**

**\$2.7 Million  
Projected  
Budget Shortfall**

### Mayor Vetoes recording Park Board Meetings

Earlier this year, the City Council voted on an ordinance that would have mandated that the Park Board meetings be recorded. I supported it because it was about transparency, plain and simple. The Parks department administers a \$25 million budget. The Parks Board must consider any proposal prior to City Council consideration.

Because the Park Board chooses to meet during our City Council meetings, the Council members can never attend. Being able to watch and listen to these meetings would be a great help for us in making the best decisions for the citizens. This ordinance passed 5-2. **YES** votes to record: Theresa Stehly, Marshall Selberg, Christine

Erickson, Pat Starr and Greg Neitzert. **NO** votes to record: Rex Roling and Michelle Erpenbach. Unfortunately, the Mayor **VETOED** this Ordinance. The argument was offered that having meetings recorded would "stifle conversation and comradery at meetings." I feel that if you are doing the public's business, then you need to be willing to be videotaped. Council member Rick Kiley voted **NO** to recording on our attempt to override the veto.

Some of us on the City Council would like to bring this back again, and add several other boards to this mandate. Having a public record, dialogue, accountability and easy access for review is a part of open and transparent Government.

### Neighborhood Watch Program Alive and Well in Sioux Falls



The police department is encouraging neighborhoods to consider forming a neigh-

borhood watch program. I started mine 15 years ago, and can vouch for the many benefits it provides. As our community grows, we need to be proactive in staying connected to those around us.

Caring for one another, and looking out for our neighbors is a low cost way of keeping us all safer. Call Officer Kyle Johnson at 978-6866 for more information to get your neighbors on the Watch for safety and quality living.

City Council meetings are the first 3 Tuesdays of each month at 7:00pm. Watch on Citylink (Midco channels 16 and 594; Vast channels 11 and 511) or online at [siouxfalls.org](http://siouxfalls.org). You can attend the City Council meetings at the Carnegie Town Hall, 235 West 10th Street, Sioux Falls.

### Annexation Update



Councilor Stehly and Split Rock resident Cathy Wiese pass out flyers alerting neighbors about annexation.

This year, an annexation task force was created to formulate a policy for bringing surrounding developments into the city. Because this action could result in \$30,000-

\$100,000 in assessments on these property owners, (many living on fixed incomes), I asked the City to notify the property owners about the task force meetings. I was told that they could NOT afford to do that.

Because I believe we all have the right to be involved in discussions involving our property and potential financial hardships, I used my personal funds to print a flyer and spent a weekend delivering it to these neighborhoods. It was the right thing to do. Having been notified, the homeowners have been attending each task force meeting in large numbers, and the City has been responsive and respectful. I believe it is headed in a positive direction for all involved. **Forced annexation should not be a city policy.**

### CAMPAIGN CORNER

Dear Citizens,

We have an important municipal election on April 10, 2018. **YOUR VOTE COUNTS.** Mark your calendar.

Now more than ever, our community needs leaders in government that have integrity, courage and a desire to represent the average citizen.

On the April 10th ballot: Mayoral position, two at -Large council seats and the central district and south east district council seats.

If you are interested in running, You can pick up information from the City Clerk's office at the Carnegie Town Hall, 235 west 10th street, or [Siouxfalls.org](http://Siouxfalls.org)

### Solar Speed Safety Signs

Last year I proposed buying solar speed signs to calm traffic in high complaint areas. These signs are portable and run on solar power. I also wanted a sign with the speed limit posted on top of the solar sign.

Mark Cotter director of public works, told us at the

budget presentation in August that he has purchased 6 new signs, in addition to the 2 he bought last year. They are already being used in some school zones. I have heard wonderful things from citizens about the benefits of these signs for the slowing of traffic.

## In Sioux Falls, We need Government of the People, By the People and For the People.

### \$25 million Administration Building Moves Ahead

A majority of the City Council stood together last year in an ordinance to stop the bonding for the construction of the \$25 million administration building. **This is not a replacement for City Hall!**

Now more than ever, this is a problematic project with our dwindling sales tax revenue. This building will be paid for out of the same funding that we use to fix the streets.

The Mayor **VETOED** the council's ordinance and our desire to find a more cost effective solution to the city's space needs.

Then, Citizens gathered more than 6,400 signatures to put the matter to a public vote. These valid signatures

were thrown out because of a technicality. As a last resort, I pleaded with the City Council to set an advisory vote to let the citizen's weigh in on it. Eternal gratitude to Council member Pat Starr, who courageously "stayed the course," and supported the efforts to let tax payers have a say. The other council members who voted **NO** for an advisory election: Erickson, Neitzert, Kiley, Roling, Erpenbach, Selberg.

Moving forward, we will be challenged to get as much usage out of that building as possible, to ensure that the cost to build and maintain will never has a negative impact on citizen services.

### Public Input is Helping Citizens

I have been making efforts to reach out to many citizens and help them to have their "day in court" in front of the City Council. Annexation, expensive new residential plumbing mandates, ambulance failure, zoning, dog bites, snow gate service, invasive weeds, garbage handling issues, dangerous road situations, disrespectful City treatment of citizens, and many more topics have been resolved because the citizens stood up, spoke out for their rights and received good customer service from our city government. Any citizen can address the council for up to 5 minutes at the beginning of each council meeting on any topic.

### Police Union Pay Issue



Last winter the police union went into impasse over their pay increase. By the time it was determined that they would only be receiving the 1.5% that the city was offering, the contract had already been put into place.

Four of us on the council voted to give them the pay raise retroactive to the start of the contract date of January 1st, like the other employees were getting. The Mayor broke the tie **NOT** to give them the back pay. We were told that we needed to "teach the police officers a lesson."

**YES** votes for retroactive pay: Stehly, Neitzert, Starr, Erickson

**NO** votes for retroactive pay: Selberg, Roling, Kiley, Erpenbach

### City Videos Archived by Citizen Advocate Bruce Danielson

You may recognize Bruce Danielson by his nickname "Cameraman Bruce." This man has spent countless volunteer hours videotaping city meetings, that the city won't video record. These are important meetings like the Park Board and REMSA (ambulance board) meeting. When Bruce learned that the City

was deleting city YouTube videos and possible council meetings from the city archives, he took it upon himself to archive all the meetings at a website called [sfmeetings.org](http://sfmeetings.org). Many thanks to Bruce and all those citizens who get involved and help to keep city government open and transparent.

### Should the City trim its own trees in the boulevard?

In the past, the City of Sioux Falls used tax dollars to fund the trimming of the trees in the boulevard area. These trees belong to the city.

I have been surveying other communities in SD and have found that many of them provide this service for their citizens without an extra charge. Sioux Falls implemented "Project T.R.I.M."

several years ago, which mandates that the homeowner pays to have the trees in the boulevard trimmed.

I have been hearing many complaints from citizens about this policy. I believe we need to adjust our priorities and bring this service back to the citizens without an extra charge attached.

### Snow Gate Update

Mark Cotter with public works recently gave us a sunny forecast for the use of Snow Gates this winter. Please don't hesitate to call me at 929-8783 or the street department at 367-8255 if you ever have concerns with your service from the snow operators.

**Stay informed!**

[sfmeetings.org](http://sfmeetings.org)

SIoux FALLS GOV'T PORTAL



### Benson Flea Market Meet and Greet



I had the pleasure of meeting citizens at the Bensons Flea Market last spring. It was wonderful to visit with many residents and hear their comments and concerns. I hope to attend the event again this year.

Council member Greg Neitzert and I also hosted a meet and greet at the Hy-Vee on Marion road. Let us know if you would like us to visit an area near you.

### City Councilors Wear "Many Hats"



Councilor Stehly and some of her piano students.

Many folks may not realize that the City Council position is part time and that most of us on the council have other jobs as well. One of our jobs as City Council members is to reach past the information handed to us by the department heads and the mayor's administration and find out from the citizens how each issue will impact them, the tax payers of Sioux Falls.

There have been several contracts that have come to

the City Council to approve, and we had zero input into the content and terms in the contract. I find this to be a problematic practice. I am hoping that with a new administration we will be given more input into these important matters.

As to my other employment, I teach private piano lessons, direct a church choir and teach voice at USF. (A profile on all the City Council members can be found at [siouxfalls.org](http://siouxfalls.org))

## Home Rule Charter, A Modest Proposal

Guest Column by Scott L. Ehrisman



Some think the charter works just fine as is, some would like to tear it to shreds completely. I personally think it needs some tweaks that would help it work better. We don't need to throw the baby out with the bath water.

So what would those charter amendments look like?

- Remove the mayor as a city councilor. He would no longer have VETO power or break ties. A five vote majority would be a pass unless reconsidered, and a tie would mean failure. It would require

six votes to pass taxation and fee increases.

- The mayor would no longer chair meetings. He would be requested like director heads to be in attendance in the audience to answer questions only.

- The mayor would be responsible only as the employee manager of the city.

- The council would write the budget starting from ground zero each year with the mayor only having equal input.

- The council would be responsible for all legislation, only taking advice from department heads and the mayor. The mayor could no

longer introduce legislation without consent of the council.

- All major planning, rezone proposals, fee increases would have to go through FULL council first before being introduced to the Planning Commission or other departments pertinent.

- The finance department, like the audit department would be under the control of the council and NOT the mayor.

- The city council would have their own attorney and legal department to research legislation.

Simple changes like this to the charter would guarantee more equal participation from the council while regulating the mayor's REAL duties as a city manager instead of an all powerful official.

Scott L. Ehrisman  
[southdacula.com](http://southdacula.com)

## First Year Reflections

Guest Column by Councilor Marshall Selberg



Our first year on the Council has been quite an adventure as we have had no shortage of challenges and significant decisions to make. From the debate over the new administration building, to the no smoking ordinance on City owned property, to the vote on the Costello apartments in my district on 85th & Brett, and the rezone on 6th and Bahnson, just to name a few. We have certainly faced plenty of significant challenges and decisions. It has been an honor & privilege having a seat at the table as we do our homework, listen to both sides of the issues and do our best to guide our City

in the right direction.

One of the things I have come to appreciate are the extraordinary people we have serving Sioux Falls, I am continually impressed at the talent that serves us from the City employees to the elected officials. There are a lot of smart, talented folks working to continually improve this City and I find that I learn something new from them on a daily basis. Yes, there are times when there is disagreement & debate... that's a healthy part of governing and democracy, but I never doubt that everyone's intentions are good and for what's best for our community.

As I look to the future I will continue to do my best to learn and grow in the job.



**INFORMATION IS POWER**

**Please pass this newsletter on to a friend or family member.**

**For additional copies, call me at 605-929-8783 or email me at [tstehly@siouxfalls.org](mailto:tstehly@siouxfalls.org).**

## Glory House Project

Guest Column by Councilor Pat Starr



Homelessness is a major issue in Sioux Falls and the City Council provided a partial solution by selling and gifting a portion of the former Sioux Falls Ice and Rec Center to the Glory House (a local half way house). The Glory House plans to use the former Ice and Rec land to build up to 72 permanent housing units.

Graduates of the Glory House are able to return to society by receiving the help that they need to turn their lives around after incarceration. Many have worked hard to get the assistance that they

need in the form of counselling, chemical dependency assistance, family reconciliation and job training. But the most difficult issue for Glory House residents reentering society is permanent affordable housing. With the Glory House right next-door residents of this new multi-family housing will be able to receive on going help.

According to the The Glory House's web site they employs over 50 full time and part time employees and will provide services for approximately 300 residential clients this year and approximately 150 outpatient clients.

This project will be a great asset to our community.

## Annexation Task Force

Guest Column by Councilor Greg Neitzert



The work of the annexation task force is nearing completion. As a member of the task force I have been impressed by the public involvement.

Annexation is both a moral question as well as a practical one. At some point, annexation is the right thing to do. Citizens have a re-

sponsibility to equally participate in the costs we all must share as a city.

However, we need to make sure it is the right time, the costs are realistic and not overly burdensome, and the character of existing neighborhoods is honored.

Learn more about our work at:  
[www.siouxfalls.org/annexation](http://www.siouxfalls.org/annexation).

Disclaimer: This newsletter reflects the opinions and views of Theresa Stehly and guest columnists and does not reflect the opinions of Sioux Falls city government. All costs associated with this newsletter have been paid for privately by Theresa Stehly and not from campaign donations.