

## **Council Member Column for Neighborhood Newsletters**

*Summer 2000*

### *New Office Equipment*

I've installed what is apparently a controversial piece of furniture in my office. The first council member to walk in the office thereafter laughed outright and demanded to know why it was there. It was unusual enough that this person went and brought two more people to see it. Another person was equally flabbergasted and obviously thought that I was nuts to harbor such an item. From the reaction people were giving me, you'd think that I had appeared on the Council floor sans pants. Since then, I guess word has gotten around -- Lane is doing something strange again. No, this addition to your ward office is not a wet bar, a hot tub or a rabbit hutch. It's an American Flag.

Maybe I'm old-fashioned, but I like to fly the Flag. I can remember my Dad putting our Flag up on Memorial Day and the Fourth of July. It is one of those childhood rituals which I've always connected with Summer. We've flown the Flag year-round at our house for many years. Since the election last year, I noted a marked absence of the national symbol in our Council offices so I added one to mine. I had no idea that it would generate any kind of controversy. An elected official has a Flag in his public office. No news in most quarters. Here, apparently it is almost scandalous.

Why this should be so is beyond me. Perhaps in an environment where some are focused on exercising their personal political power to the limit, we don't like to be reminded of our responsibilities. Perhaps in our haste to solve the problem of the day, we don't want to be reminded of the limitations on our actions. Or maybe we are so caught up in interest based politics, we are loath to consider the values which bind us all together. Whatever the reason or reasons, I think this reaction speaks volumes about the state of our municipal government.

Whatever your politics, conservative, liberal or somewhere in between, the Flag remains a powerful symbol of our history (both the good and the bad), our values and the ongoing conversation we must have with one another as citizens if we are to prosper. Whether we knit thirteen Colonies into a Nation or thirteen Wards into a City, we must rededicate ourselves to bringing one out of many. This, to my mind, is the opposite of the often divisive "politics as usual" practiced in City Hall. So, whatever your political views, this Summer please join me in a controversial act -- an act of hope for a better city -- flying the Flag.