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Aurora's magnificent seven

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Mayor Tauer reminded neighborhood associations the the Chinese word for "problem and opportunity" are nearly identical. The perfect storm is here and provides us with the opportunity to test term limits.

The economic storm that exacerbates Aurora's structural deficiency; a term limited mayor and six term limited council members; two public policies that are major contributors to Aurora's structural deficiency and a completed citizen survey that ranks city services can help generate rubrics to measure the success or failure of term limits.

Will Aurora's mayor and the six term limited council members act in the best interest of Aurora and its' citizens? On the other hand, will they cling to Fabian tactics designed to protect their political careers? The city of Aurora's seven term limited officials are freed from the fear of a political faux pas that could cost them reelection. They can become Aurora's magnificent seven by addressing two public policies.

1. The development impact fee:

City council directed a task force comprised of developers, consultants and city staff to determine the cost of new growth. The task force determined the historic cost of new growth based on twenty years of growth data.

Aurora's city council, in the spirit of compromise with developers and builders, implemented a development impact fee that will recover 23 cents of every dollar that new development costs. This compromise ensures that Aurora's citizens will subsidize new growth.

RUBRICS FOR TERM LIMITS ON THE IMPACT FEE

Success with honor = Aurora's city council increases the development impact fee to recover 75 cents of every dollar that new growth costs.

Success = Council increases the development fee to recover 50 cents of every dollar new development costs.

Expediency = Council revisits the development impact fee and find that recovering 23 cents of every dollar that new development costs is good public policy.

Failure = City council ignores the development impact fee as a contributor to the structural deficiency.

2. Mandated staffing ---- 2/1000

Aurora's citizens passed an ordinance that requires a minimum of two police officers per 1000 population. (2/1000) This mandated staffing ordinance became effective in 1996.

The mandated staffing ordinance has increased the public safety budget from 35% of the general fund to over 50% of the general fund. The Fire department and the Courts share of the general fund was 20% in 1994 and remains 20% in 2009. The public safety communication center is about 1% of the general fund budget. The police departments share of the general fund budget has gone from 15% in 1994 to 30% in 2009.

The Aurora Police Association sued the city of Aurora over the method of counting 2/1000. A stipulated consent decree was signed in 2003 that sets the method of counting population and 2/1000. The consent decree gave the District Court continuing jurisdiction over the parties to ensure compliance of said decree.

The stipulated consent decree has no restriction on Aurora's city council that would prohibit them to review, to revise, to amend or to repeal the minimum requirement of section 130-2 of the city code.

The city of Aurora's seven term limited elected officials need to ask themselves; Is mandated staffing of city services good public policy? If the answer is yes, they should pass a mandated staffing ordinance for the fire department. Mandated staffing that will provide uniform fire and emergency services through out the City of Aurora.

The fire department is under-staffed and is under-equipped. The City of Aurora currently relies on intergovernmental agreements with independent fire districts to help Aurora's fire department provide services in some new developments and to maintain response time.

If the answer is no; the seven term limited officials should amend, revise or eliminate the minimum of two police officers per 1000 population from section 130-2 of the city code.

RUBRICS FOR TERM LIMITS ON 2/1000

Success with honor = A. Council passes a mandatory staffing ordinance for the fire department that ensures uniform fire protection through out the city.

B. City council eliminates the requirement of 2 police officers per 1000 population from section 130-2 of the city code.

Success =A. Council increases fire department staffing and prohibits contracts with independent fire districts.

B. City council reduces mandated police staffing to the level of 1993. (1.69 police officers per 1000 population. This would, over time, restore over nine million dollars to the general fund.

Expediency = A. City council increase the fire departments response time so it is uniform through out the city.

B. City council reduces the mandated police staffing level to 1.85 police officers per 1000 population.

Failure = A. City council ignores the needs of the under staffed and under equipped fire department.

B. City council maintains they can do nothing about 2/1000.

We will not know the results of the term limit test until the Mayor and the six term limited council members act on the 2010 budget crisis.

We do know that the results of the citizen survey ranked Fire and emergency services number one, police services number two and maintaining 2/1000 number seven or in the 40th percentile.

You may prefer different rubrics to test term limits but my guess is that regardless of the rubrics, the City of Aurora's seven term limited elected officials will fall below Aurora's magnificent seven and closer to nebbish politicians.