

# the FLAME

“We Have  
Tomorrow --  
Bright Before  
Us, Like A Flame.”

-Langston Hughes

City information is available on-line at [lawrenceks.org](http://lawrenceks.org) and on cable Channel 25. The FLAME is published by the City Manager's Office, 832-3400.

## A Word From Our Mayor

It's not as if I planned to become a politician. In fact, it still makes me squirm a little to use that word about myself. But after having run for election, twice, I have to admit that's an accurate description of how I spend at least a part of my time. I'm often asked, usually with a tone of disbelief, what made me decide to run for city commission. There are days when I question that myself.

The beginning of the answer lies in the decision my family made to move back to Lawrence ten years ago. Having grown up in suburban Kansas City, Kansas (Washington High School, class of 1970), I had originally come here to attend KU. I immediately fell in love with the town, but much more slowly figured out what sort of career might be of interest. My wife Pat and I met in 1975, married in 1977, and both finished our (last) college degrees in 1983. At that point we began a series of "career moves" to Kansas City; Ithaca, New York; Osaka, Japan; and St. Louis. At that point we had had our fill of career moves and decided to make a "life move." We did some research into cities where we would want to settle more permanently, and Lawrence kept rising to the top of the list.

We bought a house, attended a Barker Neighborhood Association meeting and introduced ourselves. At the end of my self-introduction I said, "...and I'm never moving again." That statement seems to have been the turning point. Several of my neighbors must have gotten together and said, "If he's so thrilled to be here, let's put him to work." A year later I was president of the neighborhood



Mayor David Dunfield

association, a couple of years after that, president of the Lawrence Association of Neighborhoods, then city commissioner and now mayor.

Depending on your point of view, that story is either a warning of the dangers of volunteering too much information or an illustration that being open to opportunities for involvement in the community can lead to rewards and experiences you may never have imagined. On balance, I'd certainly agree with the second of those viewpoints, although there are times....

My professional training as an architect has been a real benefit to my public life. (But you'd have to ask my bosses whether public life has been good for my professional work.) Dealing with site plans, zoning, and building codes are things I do in both of my jobs. Maybe more important is the fact that architects are trained to take criticism. You don't make it through architecture school if you can't stand up in front of a group of bright, very opinionated people and absorb their ideas about what you're doing right and more often, what you've done wrong. And you don't succeed as an

architect if you don't figure out that the people you work with and for usually have something valuable to say, something that you need to learn.

Being mayor is certainly a great learning opportunity. Mayors come and go pretty quickly with the system of government we have in Lawrence. The year is going to be full of unique experiences and challenges. Fortunately, while the mayor may stand up on the stage alone, there is a large, highly trained, able and dedicated group of city staff backing up him or her.

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I am repeatedly amazed by the depth and breadth of accumulated experience and expertise that our city staff represents. It would be impossible for a mayor to be successful or even appear marginally competent without the support of staff. Whether it's a question of interpreting legal language in a city ordinance or of getting a pothole filled, we elected officials often act as a conduit to the folks who do the real work around here.

If you think of city government as a corporation with a \$100 million

### MAY 2003

#### In This Issue:

- 24/7 Services
- Firefighting Career
- Educators Recognized
- Quality Water

annual budget, you start to get an idea of the complexity of the system. Now consider a corporation whose services include everything from traffic control to summer camps, emergency services to utilities, sanitation to construction. It becomes obvious that the level of knowledge required to run such a corporation is vast. As a stockholder, would you trust that corporation to a bunch of amateurs who might only be around for two to four years? Certainly not.

And fortunately, you don't have to because while mayors come and go, city staff provides the continuity that keeps those many wheels rolling and on the tracks. To continue that analogy, the majority of the work that goes on at City Hall is a matter of momentum, keeping the machinery of city services maintained and repaired and moving on down the line. Elected officials don't really have to do much in terms of the day to day

*(continued on back)*

o u r m i s s i o n :

We are committed to providing excellent city services that enhance the quality of life for the Lawrence community.

Address Service Requested

## Firefighters (cont. from p.2)

“As a female in a non-traditional career, I was excited to share my experience with young ladies who are interested in science,” explained Toefree. “The festival gave girls a look at fire science, an area that lacks females. Removing the stereotypes of a male-dominated career early on can create the mind set that the career is obtainable.”

*Lawrence*  
**CITY LIMITS**  
**FIREWORKS-FREE ZONE**  
Same Great City - Only Safer!

City ordinance prohibits the sale, use, possession and display of **fireworks** except for professional fireworks shows.

## Mayor's Column (cont. from p.1)

operation, but the staff lets us ride up front and toot the whistle from time to time.

By now, you may be wondering if having elected officials is even a good idea. But we do perform a couple of vital roles.

The first is accountability. Since we face elections every two years, voters have the opportunity to let City Hall know whether they are satisfied with the way the city is running. Between elections, citizens are able to give us their views on that question first hand, in person, by telephone and by email. When people are dissatisfied with the city's services or the lack of services that are desired or the direction they feel we are headed, we hear about it. Listening to the community and finding ways to help our professional staff respond to citizens' concerns is a big part of the job.

The second role has to do with setting directions and priorities, creating a vision for the way future city services will be delivered and how they can best satisfy the desire we all share to make Lawrence more and more a distinctive, attractive, healthy community.

This is probably the area in which elected officials can be most helpful to city staff. There are always limited resources, always more potential jobs to do than hours and materials available to do them. The current economic situation and budget problems at the State level have made this aspect of our work even more visible than usual. By suggesting goals that are broader than the necessities of maintaining the services already in place, by establishing community-wide priorities, we allow staff to focus its efforts and analyze how its daily work contributes to the greater whole. Especially in tight fiscal times, it is important that our decisions help keep us on track toward our larger goals and help us prepare to take advantage of better circumstances when they arise.

That's the theory anyway. In the coming weeks, this new city commission will get together with members of our staff and the public to work through the budget for 2004. We'll also hold a two-day goal setting session to try to refine a vision of where the community wants to go from here.

I expect that our top three goal categories will continue to be those that we defined last year: economic development, planned growth and community building. The recent city election gave us a good sense of the direction that voters want to see us take in approaching those broad goals. Our priorities for actions that Lawrence will take to reach toward those objectives will be studied and refined as the two parallel processes of goal setting and budget resolution go forward.

Next time I write, I plan to share some concrete ideas about what I expect and hope that the city can accomplish over the next year and beyond. For now, I'll just say thank you to all those who have placed their trust in my fellow commissioners and myself. We will do our very best to earn it.

David M. Dunfield  
Mayor