

Fleet Maintenance

During the City Council meeting, 2/22, I listened to the discussion regarding the contract for Fleet Maintenance for all city vehicles. It was interesting but most disturbing.

Obviously the City is looking for everyway that it can cut expenses which I understand and salute. On the Fleet Maintenance contract, staff's recommendation was to switch from a local company that has been serving the city's needs for a number of years and go with Sarasota County Maintenance, who is looking for 'excess business'. I have a number of serious issues with this recommendation.

First, Len Bramble's, Utilities Dept., major issues were with vendor communication and computer data but not with the level of service or response time. He also said that he didn't think his issues were insurmountable and could be worked out with the local company. While Bramble appeared to be conflicted in supporting the recommendation to go with the County program, he ultimately did support that recommendation but I question his sincerity.

Most importantly, the Fire Chief, John Reed, and the Acting Chief of Police, David Dunaway, both were outspoken in their praise of the local provider and shared numerous kudos on the promptness and above and beyond response and service given to their needs. As Venice residents, the local company knows and cares about the extreme challenges the departments face.

In my humble view, as important as all city departments are, the Fire and Police Departments are the most critical and should carry the heaviest input on this subject.

The county's proposal was a minor sum lower than the expenditures paid to the local provider. If I understood the numbers correctly, the county proposal did not cover a great many of the services that have been provided on a local basis. Also, the distance traveled to take equipment in for service is farther and creates a demand for additional personnel to be available for such transport and more time and mileage to reach the county facilities which translates into more city money expended. The county proposal also did not cover all the little items such as service for small equipment used by the city which the local company has been providing, i.e. chainsaws, generators, etc etc. So here is another cost to add on to what we are already spending.

They also want Venice to make a capital investment of \$150,000 in the facility that would service some of our fleet in the South County.

I am concerned that this is the same county government that is now dumping the contractual park maintenance on the city, at a large expense to our local budget, in an effort to cut their budget. Do we really think that Venice needs will rate as importantly as the county's and will they go beyond their hours, rules, etc. to give us a top priority? Are we that naïve and trusting?

I have not addressed that the City Council recently passed a 'hire local' ordinance with should take precedent in their considerations. To drop the local business from a contract will ultimately cost local jobs and loss of local income to circulate in the Venice economy.

I salute Mayor Holic for submitting 10 questions to each of the city departments which gave us a reality check that surpassed the numerical 'bottom line' being touted by John Snyder, City Bean Counter. Usually the bottom line does not take into account all the 'little' cost that mount up and would actually leave the city paying a great deal more for a less than quality service.

I highly encourage the City Council to work out any issues and to stay with the local Venice company that has given top priority and service to our city needs.

Venice businesses are Family and who is going to take the best care of us ... Family or the neighbor up the road who has their own issues? Do I really have to ask? WW