

# Mayor Holic discusses strategies for the future

Best Wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

As we begin 2011, your city council is fulfilling promises from the 2010 election and tackling those items identified as the most important to the people of Venice.

## Strategic Planning

Through our strategic planning meeting on Dec. 2, we identified more than 25 agenda items needing attention by the council. Five of the items are considered top priority:

1. Balance the budget.
2. Hire a new police chief.
3. Complete the airport Airport Layout Plan and Master Plan.
4. Develop land use regulations
5. Partnering 4 Success - fees and permits

In addition to the agenda items, the council adopted a new vision statement:

*Venice is a vibrant, charming historical community in which to live, work and play.*

In keeping with campaign promises, we accomplished our strategic planning meeting without the use of expensive outside consultants. Instead, we used the expertise of a local business executive who provided his services on a volunteer basis.

## Budgeting in a tight economy

Regarding item 1 above, we have begun work on the budget and will continue to work on it throughout the year. Since the budget is a comprehensive document that requires thorough review and modification, we have involved all our

department heads, who have stepped up to the plate and are actively looking for ways to save money without a reduction in necessary services. I am confident that, working together, we will accomplish our goal of balancing the budget.

## Police chief selection

Regarding item 2 above, the council received a job description for the new police chief and a tentative time line for the hiring process. Again, we voted to proceed with the hiring process for a new chief without using outside consultants. I am sure we will find sufficient local talent to help the city manager interview potential candidates for this important position without paying a recruiting firm a fee of up to \$60,000. Venice is blessed with an abundance of talented residents who will gladly step up and help when asked. The time line for completion is 18 weeks.

## Airport moving forward

For item 3, progress on the airport is being delayed by a final review of the ALP/Master Plan by the FAA. In December, I met with the head of the FAA Orlando office and the lead consultant from DY Consultants to determine what can be done to expedite work on the airport. DY is the firm that helped design the proposed ALP/Master Plan over the past three years. We are preparing to move forward as soon as we receive FAA approval.

Message from the Mayor



## land-use regulations

Item 4, development of new land-use regulations, as required by the recently approved comprehensive plan, was discussed at the strategic planning session.

It is estimated this mandatory requirement will consume in excess of 50 percent of the work time available for the Planning and Zoning Department. This work program created a new position, which has been filled, in anticipation of time needed to accomplish it.

We will work diligently to assure no time is wasted completing our requirements and to reduce the work load on our Planning and Zoning Department.

## Partnering for better business

Item 5, the initial reduction of building permit fees is effective Jan. 1, 2011. Although most members of the council were disappointed in the amount of the initial reduction in fees, it was important to move forward now and continue the revision process by partnering with a user group,

# Message from the Mayor: Get it Done

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including local contractors. The group will provide input to the soon-to-be-hired building official to further adjust the permit fees. We look toward mid-year to have a more finalized fee structure.

Most of the remaining 20-plus agenda items will help us accomplish the five main provisions listed above.

## Workshops

Due to the complexity of details needing attention and the requirement to discuss these topics in official meetings, the council decided to hold workshops on the first and third Tuesday of each month, beginning Jan. 18, from 9 a.m. to noon. We will continue the workshops until our backlog of agenda items for the city diminishes.

In an attempt to continue to bring city government to the people, we will consider holding workshops at remote locations throughout the city.

## Get it done

I would like to thank the many Venice residents who responded to the 2011 Get It Done request.

We collected many constructive suggestions from Venice area residents, the business community and local elementary, middle and high schools. All areas of the community were gracious and cooperative in submitting requests.

As a result of the survey, I will be asking the council to add the following three items to our Get It Done list - these three items all had six or more individuals making similar requests:

1. The airport was the number one topic of the e-mails with an overwhelming bias toward rapid updating and safety improvements for this important Venice asset. Additional concerns expressed via the survey were to rehabilitate Runway 4/22, promote the fly-friendly procedures currently in place, and update the airport Web site.

2. The Utility Department rated the number two slot with questions on charges ranging from backflow valves, to sewage charges for filling swimming pools with fresh water, and reducing readiness fees during periods when residents take extended vacations.

3. Filling out the top three was "Don't raise taxes!"

There were an additional 81 suggestions with four or fewer individual requests submitted.

These suggestions will be incorporated into our work load as we complete the items already listed.

I feel fortunate to come to work daily for our great city and look forward toward working together for an even better city in 2011.

*John Holic*