

A DAY IN THE LIFE ...

In 2014, The MML Review is featuring insights from local government officials across the state in the series, "A Day In The Life." In this issue, The Review asked Missouri Council Members and Aldermen to share what inspired them to serve in their community and other questions to provide a glimpse into their role as city leaders.

Terri Violet, Alderman, St. Peters

Ken Hussey, Councilman, Jefferson City

WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

Violet: After volunteering in different areas of the City and interacting with our local government representatives, I felt as though it was time to serve in a different capacity. I wanted to make a difference by helping to build and improve our community.

Hussey: For my graduate degree, my concentration was local government. I learned a great deal about the impact local government has on the daily lives of citizens, and how it is the level of government that can respond quickest and most directly to citizen concerns. In Jefferson City, I became more and more involved in our community and saw serving on the City Council as an opportunity to help move our community forward.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY?

Violet: I'm proud of how our community gets involved in the events that are offered by our City. From summertime concerts by the lake to the Veterans Day ceremony, residents attend looking forward to the next event so they can spend time with their families.

Hussey: Jefferson City has been a city that has welcomed me the past nine years, and it truly is home now. I love the opportunities it provides for young professionals, like myself, to make an impact and work with some great people to move our community forward. I love that if you have an idea, and gather a few others to help, you can make that idea a reality. I have been able to do that a number of times, and watched others do the same. You can very quickly get involved, connected with others who want to do good, and work together to make Jefferson City even better.

WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY ABOUT SERVING AS A COUNCILMEMBER OR ALDERMAN IN YOUR CITY?

Violet: I have always had a heart to serve. Working with people comes natural and is something I enjoy.

Hussey: I enjoy the opportunity to work with my fellow council members and city staff to help improve the lives of our citizens. We work together on issues that are big and small, but all can help move our community forward. I also enjoy the opportunity to get an in-depth understanding of our city government, and then communicate

that knowledge to citizens and help them better understand what role city government plays in their daily lives.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN YOUR POSITION?

Violet: Residents that don't trust politicians are a challenge. I've learned it takes time to earn their trust by maintaining integrity and being a person of my word.

Hussey: The biggest challenge is balancing this role with other work responsibilities and my family. Serving on our city council is intended to be part-time, but it can quickly take up a lot of time. It is important to remember how the role is intended to be and that you cannot let it consume you. Another big challenge is to know when to let city staff just do their jobs. It is easy to get into the weeds as a council member, and want to debate the minute details. However, our role is to make policy and empower staff to enact that policy. Finally, as many local governments are facing, one big challenge is the budget. Our revenues are not increasing at a rate fast enough to keep up with increased expenses. Ultimately, it

MISSOURI COUNCIL MEMBERS AND ALDERMEN

will require our city to evaluate and prioritize services, and determine what is the proper level of service to meet citizen expectations. If more revenue is needed, then the challenge becomes finding ways to increase revenue.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW COUNCIL MEMBER, OR SOMEONE CONSIDERING THE FIELD?

Violet: I would advise new members to spend as much time learning from city staff as possible. They have a wealth of knowledge to share and it's a great way to build a good working relationship. For those considering the position, being an effective Alderman requires giving a significant amount of time to the position. This should be heavily considered and also discussed with close family members before making a final decision.

Hussey: I would encourage them to visit with councilmembers who have previously served. Ask them not just about policy issues, but also how it impacted their personal lives. Ask them about how they balanced their job and this position, or balanced their family life and this position. It is important to know that this position will take time away from your family and your job. I missed my five-year-old daughter's first soccer goal this fall because I was at a budget meeting. It is tough to miss moments like that, but I know there will be more for her and she knows that daddy is helping make the city better.

One piece of advice I was given by a past council member was that if you get a salary for serving on the council, consider using that on your spouse and family. For example, since our council meets in the evening, he recommended

hiring a babysitter during each meeting so my wife could have some time to herself also. I think that is great advice, especially for council members with young families.

WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD, WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP?

Violet: Being the oldest child in my family, I used to play the teacher. I'm now a mother of two wonderful adult children and a grandmother of five beautiful grandchildren. I've definitely fulfilled that dream over the years.

Hussey: I have always had an interest in politics and government, and thought I would end up working in government and/or elected to office. I also was drawn to education and possibly teaching, so my work with the YMCA Youth In Government helps me fulfill those interests.

MOST PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO LEARN ...

Violet: I am a U.S. Navy veteran that served our country for six years

earning an honorable discharge.

Hussey: During my freshman year at Truman State University, I was Spike the Bulldog, our university mascot.

TO WHAT LOCATION WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO TRAVEL, AND WHY?

Violet: My dream trip would be to Scotland. I would like to be in the land my family originated.

Hussey: There are so many locations that I would like to travel, but for right now I think some time on a beach in warm weather would be great. ☐

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