

# GETTING TO KNOW YOU



**Ben DeClue**  
Assistant City Administrator  
Lebanon, Missouri

## What sparked your interest in local government?

**DeClue:** I was always interested in public service. When a seat on my hometown (Crystal City) city council was opening up, I was encouraged to run. I did so and served two terms. Toward the end of my tenure, I helped hire our first professional city administrator. Between that experience and being good friends with a city administrator in a neighboring town, I adjusted my career path and went into city management.

## What has been the toughest lesson you have learned during your career in local government?

**DeClue:** If you want the truth about a person, project or idea to reach the community, you have to put it out there and aggressively defend it yourself. People will always chase a perceived controversy, regardless of the merits of the argument.

## In your opinion, what are the most important issues facing local government today?

**DeClue:** The most important issue is loss of local control in the face of state and federal mandates and laws. Local government used to be the hotbed of government innovation. You could test ideas locally that could then be modified for use at the state and eventually national level. Today cities are increasingly facing “one size fits all” approaches on too many issues. Let cities innovate and learn the lessons necessary to refine ideas for broader application.

My second issue would be the viciousness of social media and anonymous internet forums. The attacks on local government by people on social media and especially anonymous internet forums - some of them are unfortunately run by local media- has gotten out of control. People are afraid to run for office or apply for staff positions. Something needs to be done, because ignoring it has not made it go away.

## What advice would you offer to someone considering service as a local government official in their community?

**DeClue:** Do it. It is highly rewarding and a great way to make a difference in the world. Just don't read the comments ...

## How would you describe your city to someone who has never visited?

**DeClue:** Lebanon is a town that makes things, from aluminum boats to electrical components. Our political and professional leaders have also made a lot happen for the community over the years, putting Lebanon in a very enviable position for future growth and development.

*MML would like to learn more about your local government career! If you would be interested in participating with the Review's "Getting To Know You" feature, contact Laura Holloway at [Lholloway@mocities.com](mailto:Lholloway@mocities.com).*

## What are your interests outside of local government?

**DeClue:** I have three great passions in life: Mizzou football and basketball, board and strategy games, and television.

## Where would you most like to travel, and why?

**DeClue:** I have always wanted to do a tour of Russia. As a kid it seemed so closed and mysterious. It's my understanding that Siberia is absolutely beautiful. 🌿