

GETTING TO KNOW YOU



Steve Hargis
Public Works Director
Rolla, Missouri

In this issue, Rolla's Public Works Director Steve Hargis shares some thoughts about local government service.

same cook, different people. All I could do was my best.

The same situation is amplified in serving the public. How do you meet everyone's expectations while staying consistent with how you deliver those services? Do your best. Always be firm, fair, consistent and always looking for ways to say yes. If you or your staff make a mistake, admit it and learn from it. You will still have residents, as well as elected officials, that will not be satisfied but they usually know you did your best. They will respect you all the more for your efforts.

government you need to know the why, how, where and how much of revenue streams and the why, how and where they are expended.

How Would You Describe Your City To Someone Who Has Never Visited?

Hargis: A growing and going small university community nestled in the heart of the Ozarks, situated equal distances from St. Louis, Springfield and Columbia. The people are friendly and helpful. The scenery is beautiful. The schools are top-notch. It's a great place to raise a family.

What Sparked Your Interest In Local Government?

Hargis: There is no short answer on how I ended up serving in local government. I can say that I have a few regrets from my 64 years on earth, but serving my hometown for the past 40 years is not one of them. The community and I both have had quite a journey.

What Has Been The Toughest Lesson You Have Learned During Your Career In Local Government?

Hargis: When I was in high school and junior college I worked as a cook at Howard Johnson's restaurant. The inside joke was that we served 28 flavors of ice cream and one flavor of food. That being said, I always tried my best. I had people come in the kitchen and say things like "Son that was the best steak I ever had!" or "Son you need to go back to pumping gas!" Same food,

What Advice Would You Offer To Someone Considering Services As A Local Government Official In Their Community?

Hargis: If you enjoy public service and civil engineering, public works is a great fit. There are few circumstances you can find where an engineer can plan, design, construct, maintain and replace civil projects all in one place. Cities offer a wide, diverse and challenging place to practice as an engineer, with many different types of projects. I look forward to coming to work every day.

In Your Opinion, What Are The Most Important Issues Facing Local Government Today?

Hargis: It is always about the money! There is never enough funds to provide the services you would like. You are constantly challenged to stretch tax dollars as far as possible and beyond. In

What Are Your Interests Outside Of Local Government?

Hargis: Family, especially our four great kids and three wonderful grandkids. Mountain bike riding, canoeing, camping and fishing. I am also the designated grounds keeper and handyman at my wife's horse ranch.

Where Would You Most Like To Travel, And Why?

Hargis: I have been all over the United States, as well as trips to Canada and Mexico, but I have never been to Washington, D.C. This is number one on my bucket list. 🍀

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.

