

GETTING TO KNOW YOU



Joe Garritano
Council Member
Wildwood, Missouri

What Sparked Your Interest In Local Government?

Garritano: I always had an interest in getting involved with local government, but I never thought it would happen so soon. As the president for the neighborhood HOA, I got my first taste of interacting with our city government over a controversial development that was proposed next to our subdivision. The residents looked to me and this presented me with an opportunity to put together a plan so that their concerns could be heard and addressed. I formed a great committee of residents that worked tirelessly. I learned that by building relationships and demonstrating the willingness to find common ground that the residents, city and developer could come up with a compromise and turn the situation into a win-win for all.

What has been the toughest lesson you have learned about local government?

Garritano: Do not jump to conclusions! It is very easy to quickly formulate an opinion about a topic, especially if you're engaged in conversation with just one person. I believe it is important to be a good listener and hear as much as possible from as many residents. Candor with respect is key.

In this issue, Wildwood Council Member Joe Garritano shares his insight about local government service.

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

Garritano: You need to enjoy talking with people, whether you agree or disagree. As long as you have conversation, anything is possible. You also need to have courage to be able to walk into tough situations and maintain a respectful and productive dialogue. Remember that you need to be a leader and people will look up to you as a role model.

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

Garritano: One of the most important issues, especially for those of us that are in St. Louis County, is the threat to the very existence of local government. Our city was founded 22 years ago by residents that wanted to control their own destiny. This has worked out very nicely for us over these years. However, there are some people that feel there are too many local governments and would like to change that. Local issues are resolved by local governments!

Rural internet access continues to be an issue for residents that would like to be able to receive highspeed broadband to do activities online that many others have been doing for years, such as telecommuting and streaming movies. The lack of internet access places these impacted residents at a disadvantage.

Lastly, I'd like to note the impact that e-commerce has had on our brick and mortar businesses, especially those located on Main Street. We need to find ways to help these businesses draw shoppers to their communities. Collaboration between the business community and local government is key.

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

Garritano: Wildwood is a gem here in western St. Louis County. It is a paradise for anyone that enjoys nature, the outdoors, community events, and that Main Street feel. We are fortunate to have recreational parks and we have an extensive network of trails for hikers, joggers, runners and bicyclists. Whether you like that neighborhood feeling or if you like having open space, there are many options to make your home here. What's also great about Wildwood is that we are conveniently located between I-64 and I-44 so it's easy to get around.

What Are Your Interests Outside Of Local Government?

Garritano: I enjoy volunteering in local community organizations such as the Knights of Columbus and the USO. It is a great feeling to give back to people, especially our service members and their families that have made great sacrifices for our country.

Where Would You Most Like To Travel, And Why?

Garritano: I would like to travel to Europe because there is history everywhere you go. There is a lot to learn from the cities there that have stood the test of time. As well, there is so much to learn from cities that have demonstrated leadership with environmental sustainability initiatives that we can similarly embrace in our communities. 🍋