



Getting To Know You...



BOB BENNETT

*Alderman, Ward 2
City of Parkville*

What sparked your interest in serving in local government?

I retired after a 25-year career in the Army directly into the Chief Innovation Officer role for Mayor Sly James. The working environment in local government shared many of the best attributes I experienced while in uniform - an opportunity to simultaneously work and serve the community, a dedicated, patriotic workforce and the chance to make a difference with my work.

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

I was disappointed to learn that some of the inter-departmental struggles over budget and staffing are as nasty bureaucratic infighting as I ever saw in my Army career. I'm glad that leaders who work that way are the exception and not the rule for the most part, but their very existence at all reminds me of why some of our residents feel skeptical about dealing with their local government.

In your opinion, what are the most important issues facing local government in Missouri?

Uniting the public, private and education sectors in an effort to leverage technology and unprecedented federal support is an amazing, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. At the local level, I have seen amazing public/private collaborations that helped us build "smart cities" and initiate some effective and equitable economic development projects. Unfortunately, the current ineffectiveness of the state legislature is an impediment to progress because the critical link between federal funding entities and city councils is minimally competent.

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

Remember your reason for serving. When situations arise that make things difficult or cause frustration, remembering why you serve will help you frame a solution that helps your community get closer to the ideal you envisioned when you started. And commit yourself long-term to the ideal you envisioned, because it may take many iterative, compromise steps to get there.

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

You know that "perfect little town" from every Hallmark movie? I live there. And it's located less than 30 minutes from Arrowhead Stadium (as are all the other big-city attractions you can imagine).

What are your interests outside of local government?

I enjoy watching sports - especially the Chiefs and the Chicago Cubs - and I play bass in a local cover band.

Where would you most like to travel, and why?

Tales from the South Pacific is one of my favorite books; I would love to see the islands where it was based some day. 

Local Government Officials