

**Mayor's column for
The Beacon & The Enterprise
For publication on 12/23/09 and 12/24/09**

As we approach 2010, I want to take the opportunity to say happy holidays to everyone! This past year was a very difficult one in city government. It's easy to manage when you have plenty of revenue, but managing in a year like 2009 was no easy task.

While the budget cuts last spring were very painful, they were the right thing to do. Asking City employees to take furloughs was also painful but, again, the right thing to do. And the decision to contract for fire service rather than have our own fire department (after 105 years) was one of the most difficult decisions for me as mayor.

We operate in a different economy now than any of us have ever seen in our lifetimes. This new economy, or lack of it, has necessitated changes in how the City operates as well.

The Council and many citizens worked hard on a possible levy to take to the voters in 2009 to help ease our revenue problem. When the contract for fire service looked as if it was a real possibility, the levy took a back seat. Our projections were that the fire contract would put us in a good revenue position for several years and push off the need for the levy into the future.

My first look at projections for the next five years has confirmed that the contract for fire service has done exactly as we thought it would. Again, only a first-blush look at the numbers says that we can put off a levy vote until 2011 or 2012. Make no mistake, it will be necessary.

If we do nothing, we will find ourselves in the same position in 2014 that we found ourselves in 2009. I will be giving the Council a budget update in early 2010 as we lay out a plan for the next five years. Next year we also begin work on the 2011-2012 budget, and we begin negotiations on all our labor contracts once again.

I know I repeat myself, but the bottom line is that we need to find new revenue streams in the City if we are to continue to provide services to our residents. The recent presentations by the Cities of Bothell, Mountlake Terrace, and Lynnwood on how they have gone about economic development in their towns were enlightening. We have much work to do to catch up to those cities.

So, as we embark on the new year, I wish you and your families a happy and safe holiday season and a prosperous 2010. Closing out my tenth year as mayor, I must again say what an honor it is to serve the citizens of this beautiful city.