

Town of Iowa

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January 22, 2024

Greetings All,

On a quick glance you may notice that this Mayor's Report is different than the normal ones from the past year. This of course is on purpose, not only the way it is formatted, but also this will become a quarterly report. It is another reason that this report is late in getting out as well, since the October report I have contemplated this change, but wanted to give it a full year under the old format. I believe this 3rd iteration is now ready to publish.

What a year it has been for me as Mayor, I can attest that it has been a learning curve and I am quite confident that I have more to learn. My perception coming into office was skewed and jaded, as there was an appearance of apathy and status quo. What I have come to understand over this past year is that true leadership requires extremely hard decisions, and that the reality of the office of Mayor is much more than anyone of us who are not in government servitude can imagine. There are decisions that have to be made on a daily basis and they have to be weighed, considered and finally a decision made.

Today I am proud to make this statement, the Town council and I have a good relationship and this makes the decision making that much easier. What makes this easier is that we are operating out of the same book and on the same page. That page we are on - is what is best for the Town of Iowa. As I have said many times before and will hold true as long as I am your mayor. Its not about me and its not about now, its about the town of Iowa and its future.

So what book are we in at the moment, fiduciary responsibility. Our tax dollars as citizens should be handled with the utmost care so that it benefits the Town of Iowa. Because of this we have had to cut employee benefits, and curb the rates on spending. We as your elected officials chose to amend an ordinance excluding the council and mayor from mandatory raises. Additionally, we also have revamped our fleet purchase process and have converted them to leases and the program will save us thousands of dollars a year. This will also help us curb our high maintenance cost on the older town vehicles. We will also be able to sell the vehicles at the optimum time to recognize the best dollar figure to put back into our lease program. We are continuing to address our infrastructures, not only by assessments of our water plant but also our waste water facility. Because of the assessments we have already addressed some of the most troublesome issues we were having. Furthermore, we have added a third party permitting/inspection service for the Town, this has been very helpful as it does not allow for favoritism,

and establishes an equal footing for all residents. Through this process we have established a robust condemnation program that has seen many dilapidated buildings come down and property cleaned up. There are many to go, and we are happy to report that we did receive an LCDBG Grant that will help those that qualify for those funds. There are many more examples, but this I feel is one of the most important things that we have done this past year. And as is with most of these they rarely are seen on a daily basis, but are required to move our town forward. We have allocated a sum exclusive to Economic Development for the Town. We feel that the more business and residents we bring to this area the better our infrastructure will be, the more robust our economy, and the better quality of life we can achieve. By establishing an Economic Development Plan for Iowa, we can assure the long-term growth that includes maintaining and upgrading our infrastructure in hopes that it will drive our costs down which in turn will benefit all our residents.

I believe our future looks bright in spite of the inflation and uncertain times of our day. It is my hope that in March of this year I will be able to report the "Stephen Vincent Emergency Operations Center" funding has been authorized and hopefully we can break ground by the end of the year on a facility that could become a hub for emergency operations for south west Louisiana.

We are also awaiting a decision on a grant in respect to what we are calling the "Downtown Plaza". This project will boast eateries as well as venue for entertainment and Historical Information.

I would also like to report that the Town of Iowa has been awarded \$300,000 dollars by the State of Louisiana for tools/equipment. This is great news we are able to purchase these items without the Town of Iowa having to use funds related to the General Fund. So, in the near future you may see new equipment about town, if you see Senator Abraham or Representative Romero, thank them please for their help in this effort.

Just this past week we took possession of a new piece of equipment that the town desperately needed replaced, a large trailered Air Compressor for the maintenance department, this too was a specific purchase from a grant provide to the town of Iowa. This helps us maintain financial discipline on our funds/budget by not having to amend our budget in order to have to replace needed equipment.

We as a town have a lot to look forward to this coming year, and it is my hope that eventually we can fully staff the administration and maintenance departments so that we can become more efficient and provide you, the residents, with the better quality of life that we all seek.

Please note that your council person is available for your questions and concerns, most of them do have jobs and may not be able to return calls right away. If you are uncertain of your specific council person, please call 337-582-3535 and the ladies in the front office can help you with that information.

As some of you are aware we upgraded our website early last year and as is the case we are continuing to upgrade so that we can better serve the residents of the Town. We are working on an additional page to the Town website that will have embedded audio or videos that are informational in nature. We are hoping to have this added sometime early March.

For those that might be new to this report, or as a reminder, sign up for town alerts at www.iowala.org so that you can be informed of things such as; boil advisory's, inclement weather closings, council meeting agenda postings and such.

I know that the new year has already given us some bumps to work through, but I do hope this coming year is your best year yet!

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Watkins', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Watkins