RE-ELECT DAWN CAPRA FOR MAYOR (article paid for by Dawn Capra for mayor)

Since we are not having a candidate forum, I wanted to relate a few of the accomplishments of the City while under my direction. Below I have listed details of these accomplishments. I appreciate you reading through these and hope that they will convince you that with two more years as Mayor, I and the City can make even more changes to make Johnson City the best place to live in Texas. I greatly appreciate your vote on May 6th.

A Financial policy was implemented in 2013 shortly after I was first elected to maintain checks and balances on the City's finances. The policy provides the City Council and Staff a road map for properly investing municipal funds and directs the City Secretary complete 10 hours of Public Funds Investment Act training to ensure he is informed of state and/or federal regulations regarding the investing of City funds. To meet State Comptroller standards for fiscal transparency (which earned the City a Silver Medallion award), we updated the City website so now, all financials, agendas, and minutes can be viewed online. Also, the City moved to Fund Balance, an accounting system more suited for municipal finances and budgeting. This new system has helped the City to maintain a balanced budget and to keep from raising taxes. We have worked hard to keep within budget and to NOT RAISE TAXES for the last two budget cycles. To protect our customers’ personal account information, the City has adopted the “Red Flag” rules in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission. This policy determines possible identity theft when opening a new service. By watching for multiple accounts used in the past and present by the same person and making sure that their identification is authentic helps to reduce the possibility of identity theft.

To better serve our customers, City Hall is currently undergoing renovation. Two offices and the restrooms are being remodeled. The remodel will provide added security to employees and allow for more room in the waiting area during court days. Further, to improve City response to customer complaints and needs, a work order system has been instituted. This system keeps track of calls to city hall. The city is also considering instant notification software that would be used to notify residents of boil water notices, water line breaks, low water pressure, and any other notifications that the public needs to know in a timely manner. The city will have the ability to notify citizens by email, text, cell phone, or land line. Lastly, customers can now use Payclix, an online bill pay for water/sewer/trash bills.

The Emergency Management section of the Public Works Department helped to complete the Hazard Mitigation Plan for the Blanco County area. Our upgraded radio system keeps us in contact with Blanco County and the Emergency Operations Center during times of emergency. For non-declared emergencies, the City Hall is well equipped to monitor weather conditions and deploy city employees where needed. We have a push notification system whereby texts are sent if a breach in a water line has occurred, or any other situation effecting public health and safety develops. If you do not think that you are part of this system and want to be, contact City Hall or sign up via the website. We also work closely with the County on reverse 911 calls to alert people in times of emergency.

The Municipal Court has also changed its mode of operation. The municipal court has been established as a court of record and can now hear cases that would otherwise be directed to the District Court. Also, court fees and citations can now be paid online. The online court payment system is a major advancement for the city because our fee collection rate has increased while the load on the court has lessened. Further, community outreach has become a priority for the court. Our court clerk participated in Project graduation and served coffee and doughnuts during Veteran’s Day and Municipal Court Day.

The city recently updated the land use map and zoning ordinance. Other ordinances of significance that were added or amended include the Itinerant Merchant/Peddlers’ Permit Ordinance (this ordinance now also includes a section for Market Day vendors), the new Industrial Waste Ordinance that enables the City to keep track of waste that flows into the wastewater treatment plant so that we can ensure the plant operates efficiently and a new Dilapidated Building Ordinance. To enforce this ordinance and the Nuisance Ordinance that the city has had for years regarding yards, trash, vehicles, etc., a new Code Enforcement Officer was hired. We updated the Bulk Water Ordinance with new procedures and fees for bulk water purchase and the hose is now equipped with a monitor to keep track of the water as contractors fill their tanks.

We updated the Animal Control ordinance to ensure that we comply with State law; sections to the animal ordinance were added regarding lawful ways to restrain your pet and some of the old language was reworked so the ordinance is now easier to understand. Further, the City partnered with Wags for dogs and is working with Thundering Paws to provide services for cats. Wags provides spay/neuter services, microchipping, advice on how to care for your dog and other services that our community pets need. For cats, the City is working on a draft agreement with Thundering Paws to create a plan to deal with the feral cat population as per the updated ordinance.

The city approved a “Backflow Prevention Policy” to protect our water system from accidental contamination as recently happened in Corpus Christi. Backflow preventers are required to be tested annually and any deficiencies repaired. This is a state law that the city enforces and is mainly applied to businesses, pools, and irrigation systems where a chance of cross contamination may be present. The City has enacted a “Grease Trap Policy” to assure that a minimum amount of grease and cooking oils make it to the sewer plant. Greases and oils are extremely difficult to treat and lower the efficiency of the wastewater plant. TCEQ requires that all restaurants comply with this ordinance.

In continuation of the City’s smart management of tax dollars, a VERP fee was added to the water bills to help offset the costs of vehicles and equipment for the public works department; therefore, freeing up funds for other projects. So far, two good used diesel trucks, a dump truck, and a tractor to clean the planned drying beds at the wastewater plant have been purchased. Currently, the city is in the process of doing an impact study to determine the immediate and long term affects that any new developments will have on our existing infrastructure. Once the study is complete, the city will be able to collect impact fees from developers to help offset the costs of any future expansions to our water or wastewater facilities and not have the burden of the costs placed on the current residents. These funds are put into a separate account and can only be used for infrastructure expansions.

Our GIS (geographical information system) program is continually being updated with information relevant to the public works department. Data includes floodplains, property boundaries, fire hydrant repair locations and dates, water and wastewater lines, etc. This information is used to keep track of when work is done, placement of utilities, and any other pertinent information regarding our utilities. Also, we created a Water Conservation Plan, updated our Drought Contingency Plan, completed a Water Loss Audit, updated our CCN map (which is the map used to show the water/wastewater service area of the City) and updated our city limits and ETJ map.

The Recycle Center has undergone a transformation over the last 4 years. Curbside service for businesses has been successful, even with the addition of a fee for service, and the hours of operation for the center are on the website as are what recyclables are accepted. The partnership with Progressive for residential curbside recycling has proven to be quite successful.

In place of the Youth Municipal Advisory Council, which succeeded in planting a community garden, the City has partnered with the school in their internship program. Students can work and learn skills while also obtaining high school credit. We have an intern who works in the Public Works Department and we plan on hiring another for the next school year. This year’s intern will be able to take her test for Class C certification.

The wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is receiving much needed upgrades. We will be installing new pumps, converting to a fine bubble air system in aeration basin, installing a new blower and piping, installing two tile beds to replace sand drying beds, replacing the polymer system, and installing a new step screen at the headworks. These upgrades will enhance the efficiency of the plant by reducing electrical usage, reduces sludge drying time and reduce sludge disposal costs. Additionally, the City is applying for a CDBG grant to build a 200,000-gallon groundwater storage tank. On-hand water storage capacity will be increased by approximately 33%. The City is also applying for grant for a new generator at WWTP. The current generator is an old military surplus generator that will be incapable of providing emergency power to the plant after the upgrades. We are also sizing it for any future expansion of the plant.

This year, we have rehabilitated a total of 61 hydrants and plan to do 40 more hydrants next year. The fire department has a map of the location of the rehabilitated hydrants and is aware that those with a green painted “nose” have been repaired and operate properly; this also eliminates any chance of a hydrant malfunction. The rehabilitated hydrants will also be put on an annual maintenance program to assure that they are kept in good working order. In addition, street signs and stop signs have been replaced throughout the city and other traffic and informational signs will be replaced in the future. The new signs meet the Texas Municipal Uniform Traffic Code requirements on size, color, and reflectivity.

We are continuing to pave all streets in the City. This is an ongoing project that will last for several more years until all streets in JC have new hot mix paving. While this method of paving is more expensive, the life of the asphalt makes up for the additional cost. This year’s paving will include Pecan from Nugent to Ave Q, Ave. O, which recently had to have the entire sewer line replaced, Gonzales Ave., and additional parking across from City Hall. Additionally, the low water crossings on Ash and Pecan have been replaced and the crossing on Gonzales Ave. will be replaced this summer.

Park improvements during my tenure have been extensive. The pool recreation building has been remodeled and updated with new appliances. The tennis courts have been painted, the major cracks repaired, and new nets installed. A pool shade was erected over the baby pool. Doggie care stations were installed at each park, the Memorial park bathroom had a roof replacement and new paint job, and trashcans with the City logo were placed throughout downtown. Further, LCRA and PEC recently did a “Day Out” and painted the restroom and pool building.

With help from residents and The Home Depot, the concession stand and bleachers at the ball field received much needed repairs and renovation. Grinder pumps were installed at the concession stand so that sinks could be added. The electrical system was repaired and now we have a separate breaker for the field lights and the concession stand. Appliances, shelving, and cabinets were professionally installed by The Home Depot. They also helped us paint the stand and added a mural of the LBJ Eagle. Finally, concrete was poured to install new bleachers and to prevent flooding of the field. The City did receive generous donations from Lone Star Capital Bank and Skybeam (now Rise Broadband) to complete this project.

The much-anticipated skate park and washer pits are complete. The project also includes a nature garden, granite benches and a rainwater collection system. The City received a grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to make these improvements.

In conjunction with PEC and RES, the installation of a 14-acre solar farm on the 19 acres of City owned property just past Flat Creek Road will begin this summer. The Johnson City installation will be the first of its kind in the PEC service area.

The City worked with TXDOT to close Nugent to truck traffic and establish the intersection of 281 and 290 as the designated truck route. This has significantly reduced the amount of truck traffic on the Spur. We have also asked for the streetlight warning sign located on 290 W coming in from Fredericksburg to be moved farther out to give drivers ample time to prepare for the red light. And, TxDot is considering rubber paint rumble strips for the curve coming into that side of town prevent further accidents and to add reflectors marking the curve.

I am proud to have been a part of these changes and additions to Johnson City. I ask for your vote on Saturday, May 6th, so that I can continue to work with City Council for the betterment of Johnson City.