

MEMO FROM EMMETT MAYOR GORDON W. PETRIE

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC PLANNING VS. STATUS QUOISM

In this November Memo, most of you reading this will soon know, if not already, whether these memos will continue. Many folks, mostly new arrivals, whom I have never formally met before, often stop me on the street—they must recognize my tie, it couldn't be my hairline—and thank and congratulate me for these memos. Yet, what they tell me *after* their congratulations is really the most important communication any mayor could possibly have: “We love it here!” they say. “We just moved from [fill in the blank with a left coast or southwestern state] and we love what you are doing with this town!

That is both gratifying and humbling at the same time. Frankly, it's not me as much as Team Emmett, i.e., the department heads and their staff. They do the heavy lifting. I'm in charge of vision, overall execution and ensuring we plan properly, of course. Yet, city staff and their first line leaders are the ones expending the calories. Indeed, it was heartening to hear my opponent actually endorse the team-building model my administration has instituted as the most significant contribution to Emmett in the last going on five years. My goodness! It's hard to believe I've captained the Good Ship Emmett that long. Seems like yesterday when I took over the helm.

In any system I've had the opportunity to administer, my goal has always been to leave it in better shape than I found it. I can honestly say through third-party objective rating systems that on each and every occasion, I met my goal.

I remember when I arrived in Emmett in 1989 as the first lawyer-magistrate chambered in Gem County. The magistrate clerks were understandably nervous. This would be the first time a lawyer would be their daily companion Monday through Thursday. (I had to get 40 hours' worth of work accomplished in four days because each Friday I had to help out Caldwell—since they

were so “busy”.) Nevertheless, once the clerks understood my system and adopted it, they realized it meant less work for them and constituted a superior way of tracking our cases as opposed to the outdated model they had adopted a decade or two before. As an added bonus, we became the most efficient magistrate court in the state.

The point of all this is to underscore how the status quo game is often played in local politics. It is designed to allow the office holder keep his or her position without having to lead boldly, or frankly, to even lead. The status quo style of governance “goes along” to “get along”. People get used to a certain rhythm and heaven forbid anything gets changed. There’s only one problem with that. It leads to such things as failed waste water treatment plants, EPA fines, and when new leaders step in to clean up the mess, they pay double or triple the cost to fix something that should have been fixed years before.

The author of this memo is an ardent foe of status quo-ism. It constitutes an intellectually dishonest model of governance. It holds back communities from what they could be—and, indeed, *should* be—all the while pandering to a close-knit group of self-appointed insiders. As I mentioned in a Re-elect Mayor Gordon Petrie Face Book posting earlier, I know of no efficient way to establish a “culture of excellence” under the model of status quo-ism. Our vision statement, developed right after the council appointed me mayor to fill the vacancy left by Commissioner Butticci’s exit, states a clear and concise vision to become “[a] core competent municipal team providing excellence in municipal governance.” This notion is definitely not status quo-ism as normally practiced around this part of the state.

I also noted that Emmett’s Mission Statement does not lend itself to status quo-ism: “A city that protects its residents and their property using best practices”. Best practices suggest we

always seek better ways—tried, true and tested ways of doing everyday things better, faster and more efficiently; the kinds of practices that stretch tax payers' hard-earned dollars.

So, we shall see, eh? Do we continue the trend of historic progress in getting a handle on our deteriorating infrastructure by actually doing something about it, efficiently and economically, or will we have something else? Either way, know I was blessed and honored to have served you. That's why every day I made a best effort to serve you with honor.