

## July 2020 Column

As the Covid-19 virus continues menacing our community and our nation, nothing “feels” the same any more. I know the virus is still the number one thing on peoples’ minds right now. We all know how to take all the precautions with masking, distancing and hygiene, but we still crave getting our old lives back. We crave the “feeling” of the discipline and regularity of a work week, a school week, or Sunday church. We want that great Friday night feeling back. It’s really easy to get cynical and depressed with what is happening all around us... but as all things do... this too shall pass. Please keep your thoughts, prayers going for GRMC, their staff, and all the healthcare professionals in our community who are working unimaginably long hours trying to combat Covid-19.

I’m not trying to minimize the seriousness of combatting the virus, but amidst the pandemic, there are some positive things happening that are great news for our city and everyone who lives here.

During all that’s been going on with the virus, your city government and its staff have continued to plan and build towards the future, and here are a few items of good news, along with some of the hard-working staff who are making it happen.

Our Director of Finance, Susan Caddell, just informed us our sales tax revenue for the month of May is up 9.42% over May of last year! Now that is a pleasant surprise. We are up 8.29% for the year-to-date. I’ve also just learned that our unemployment rate for June was 7.5%, which is half of what it was in May. Like I’ve stated before, this means that our citizens are working and buying things. It means that our strategy of building essential manufacturing jobs has kept our economy stable and functioning during some trying times. It means that we will come out of the Covid crisis in better shape than most communities in the country.

Our economic development continues at a high level. Our director of economic development, Josh Schneuker and his talented crew just secured another top-notch company for our city. The company is called Coffee Tech, and will make high-end instant coffee and other related coffee products for private label and commercial use. Coffee Tech is investing \$56 million in plant and equipment, will hire 100 people, and have an annual payroll exceeding \$5.8 million. It will be located across 8<sup>th</sup> Street from Niagara Bottling, and will be neighbors to two other new companies building their plants in Seguin – Continental Structural Plastics and United Alloy. In addition to all this, the SEDC has been hard at work recruiting several new retailers, so stay tuned.

Our housing market is booming. In all of last year, the city issued 172 new residential permits. We are just past mid-year, and that number has nearly doubled. There are about 8,000 new home sites under plat right now that will be built in the next 3-5 years. We will soon have that critical mass of population and individual wealth that will bring us the retail businesses that so many of you have been demanding. Thanks to Pamela Centeno, our City Planner, and David Rabago, our City Engineer and their staffs for their amazing work in keeping progress going during these very chaotic and demanding times.

And lastly, we are expanding our waste-water treatment facilities to accommodate all this growth for the next 50 years or more. Tim Howe, our Director of Water and Waste-Water, and our Assistant City Manager, Rick Cortez along with David Rabago have presented a plan to expand our waste-water facility on Geronimo Creek and de-commission our plant on Walnut Branch, just south of downtown. This \$184 million project was approved by City Council on July 7<sup>th</sup>. Apart from managing the coming growth, this project will have some amazing positive effects on our city.

The Walnut Branch treatment facility just south of downtown will no longer be an obnoxious liability that has plagued our city for so long. Just think - when that facility is gone, Walnut Branch will be fully accessible from both sides through Starcke Park East, fully accessible by the new extension of the Hike and Bike Trail (set to break ground this fall), and an entirely new area will be opened up for recreation. The historic Riverside Cemetery will be much more attractive and accessible, and neighborhood property values will greatly increase. It will be a beautiful gateway into our downtown, draw tourists and new residents to Seguin, and enhance our quality of life beyond measure.

While we are all still dedicated to doing what we can to stem the tide of Covid-19, please be assured that your city is still functioning well, and that we have great people doing great things, and when this virus subsides, there is no limit to what we will achieve.

Gosh I love this town!