

THE DAVIS PLAN | **OPEN GOVERNMENT REFORM**

DAVIS OUTLINES PLAN FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT REFORM

EVANSVILLE, IND. – Vanderburgh County Treasurer and mayoral candidate Rick Davis today announced a set of changes and reforms that he promises to institute if elected mayor that will improve transparency at City Hall.

“It’s time to embrace a more open, honest government, and institute a technology-based government at City Hall,” Davis said. “Regular audits and a transparent decision making process are critical to honest and democratic government.”

“My proposed changes will not only lift the veil on city government secrecy and deal-making,” he said, “but help make information more easily understandable and available. That way our citizens can better participate in governmental decision-making and interact with the City online as a core function of government and to more easily conduct everyday citizen transactions.”

“Transparency is not just about ending closed door meetings and back room deals,” Davis added. “Transparency is about increasing efficiency of government and about making decisions as a city that are information-based and democratic.” Davis said his proposals would not only open government, but also give the public the ability to track what the City does with tax dollars and more clearly show how money is spent and who might benefit from public expenditures.

Davis pledged his administration will make the following changes:

1. There will be no meetings behind closed doors like the April 1, 2008 unadvertised meeting in the mayor’s office requested by his opponent, Lloyd Winnecke, that eventually ended the 2009 homestead tax credit. In addition, Davis said he would propose a change in law so the only way the local homestead credit can be eliminated is through a public meeting with an open vote.

2. All press releases and will be posted immediately on the City’s website. There will be no exceptions to posting of press releases and they will not be removed. When documents are superseded, the originals shall remain posted though marked as “superseded” with reference to the current controlling document. Davis referred to the recent discovery that press releases relating to the 2008 decision to end the 2009 homestead tax credit were, as of last week, not posted on the city’s website with all other mayoral press releases. “Documents need to be available for review so the public can determine how decisions are made and hold officials responsible for those decisions,” Davis said.

3. The annual city budget and other city financial documents must be presented in a format that is readable and understandable to the general public. “Many, if not most, of the public reports of financial operations are neither comprehensible nor relevant to the average taxpayer,” Davis said. “It is apparent that the city bureaucracy has encouraged the fragmentation and segmentation of accounts and sub accounts so that no one outside of the Finance Department can find out the full resources provided to each governmental subunit. I doubt that anyone except a small minority of City executives knows how our tax dollars are being spent,” Davis added. “This will change in my administration. Taxpayers have a right to know.” Davis also said he will ensure that the City takes its current 75-page budget, found online at the City Controller’s Office web page, and creates a Citizens Centric Report, which narrows the entire City Budget down to an easily understood four-page summary.

4. All City Department heads will be required to present quarterly reports to the Mayor's Office and to the City Council detailing the state of the departments they head as well as itemizing and explaining up-to-date expenditures and inconsistencies with budgets and spending goals. "I would expect department heads to produce measurement and statistics to demonstrate whether we've moved in a positive direction and accomplished City goals," Davis said. "We also need to identify excessive spending patterns ahead of time to help get unnecessary City spending under control." Davis said he will also ensure that every department head creates a Citizens Centric Report that distills the respective department budget reports down to an easily read 4-page summary.

5. Potential conflicts-of-interests by City officials and employees must be disclosed. City contracts and grants to individuals who pose conflicts-of-interests will not be allowed. "There is a growing perception in the community that there are too many sweetheart deals being made at City Hall," Davis said. "Any such deals are driving up the costs of government and are unacceptable."

6. Full contact information for every City department, including the department head name and office phone numbers, will be posted on the City website along with a city organization chart.

7. All City boards, commissions, and committees will be listed on the City website with members' current contact information.

8. The City will continue working to institute both a call-in and on-line trouble-shooting system in order to more easily provide a quick resolution of constituent and neighborhood problems.

9. Davis said he will continue holding the Traveling Town Halls that the current administration holds each month throughout the community and would utilize social networking tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter to help boost attendance. Davis added that he would recommend a list of concerns that are submitted at the Traveling Town Hall meetings be presented to the City Council for review and possible resolution. "I believe a report detailing whether or not these issues are able to be resolved by city government should also be presented to the City Council, and if not, an explanation of 'why' the issue remains unresolved," Davis said.

10. The City web site will be easy to navigate for the ordinary citizen looking for accurate information so they know exactly what city government is doing with our tax dollars.

Rick Davis was elected Vanderburgh County Treasurer in 2008, where he has been recognized for bringing a new era of accountability to the office. Before being elected County Treasurer, Davis served as Chief Deputy in the Vanderburgh County Recorder's Office for six years. Davis is a former reporter and Assistant Metro Editor at the Evansville Courier & Press. Davis received his Bachelor of Science in communications from the University of Southern Indiana and a Master of Science Degree in Public Service Administration from the University of Evansville.