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Ethical approach 'what we do'

Council cool toward bringing failed issues to ballot

By Carl Burnett Jr.
The Eagle-Gazette Staff

LANCASTER -- Lancaster City Council members Monday night generally voiced agreement not to push for a new street levy or income tax issue in the spring primary election, but many cited the need for additional revenue.

The council's reflection came during the same meeting the \$22.4 million general fund budget for 2012 had its first reading.

"I don't think voters realize there is a new paradigm out there that we are operating on, and we aren't going to get any more money from Uncle Sam or Columbus," said city councilman Robert Hedges, R-At large.

In the Nov. 8 election, a .25 percent income tax for operating expenses failed 71 percent to 29 percent, while the 2.9-mill property tax levy failed 55 percent to 45 percent.

Councilman Bruce McAtee, D-3rd Ward, gave an impassioned plea for putting both issues back on a ballot soon.

"Five precincts favored the street levy," McAtee said.

He said he didn't think supporters had educated the voters about the necessity of issues.

McAtee said the income tax money going to the general fund was important. It would have enabled the city to hire back the firefighters who were laid off and replace some of the employees in other departments who have been laid off or not replaced in the past two years.

However, Councilman Tom Stoughton, R-4th Ward, said the voters were pretty clear that they didn't like the income tax.

The fact that Columbus Street had not been fixed probably played a role in the defeat in the street levy, Stoughton said.

Hedges said that the council was obligated to put the issues before the voters and that they had spoken clearly.



Joe Munyan picks up a belt guide for a riding lawn mower Friday to check the bends being made by the machine he runs at Mid West Fabrications Co. in Amanda. MATTHEW BERRY/EAGLE-GAZETTE

Mid West Fabricating wins Rotary and Eagle-Gazette ethics award

By Jeff Barron The Eagle-Gazette Staff

Conducting business in an ethical manner is just as important as turning a profit at Mid West Fabricating, company president Jennifer Johns Friel said.

"It's a key pillar of what we do," she said.

Mid West supplies parts for the automobile and outdoor power equipment industries and exports 30 percent of its

products. Besides the local plant, Mid West also has a plant in southern California.

The company on Monday was awarded the 2011 Rotary International Ethics of Business Award presented by Eagle-Gazette Media and the Lancaster Rotary.

Eagle-Gazette general manager Rick Szabrak presented Friel with the award.

Szabrak touted the company's involvement with the community, including its

work with the Lancaster Festival, United Way and the Amanda Food Bank.

"This is just a wonderful honor," Friel said. "The other companies that have won are wonderful. We didn't ask to be nominated for this. We were nominated, and that is just a huge vote of confidence for what we do. It's humbling that someone

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Award

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selects you and says you do a nice job, as opposed to just making money and employing people."

An example of ethical behavior, Friel said, was when the company helped a Wisconsin competitor fill an order when its plant's roof was damaged in a tornado this spring.

"For me, it was the right thing to do, because that's what I would want someone to do for us if we had a tragedy," she said. "It was not an opportunity for us to try and gain additional business. It was just helping out someone who is in the same business and doing what I could. That's our guiding principle. If we can help out, we'll try."

Friel's grandfather, Stanton Johns, started Mid West Fabricating in 1945. Her father, David, also ran the company before Friel became president about 12 years ago.

"My grandfather and my dad both believed it was your responsibility as a business owner to give back to the community and be very involved in the community," she said. "It's just what you do. You pay your taxes, you make your payroll, you don't pollute the environment and you support the community. So I've had that example always, and it never occurred to me to do anything otherwise."

Friel is a former television news reporter who has worked in Denver and Lexington, Ky.

"Having been in communications is big benefit for this job," she said. "Our workers want to understand what they are doing and why they are doing. With my communications background, I can explain those things to them better."

Friel said the fact that her family owns Mid West Fabricating does not put added pressure on her. But she said she does understand the responsibility involved.

"It's a tremendous responsibility," Friel said. "I sure don't want the company to fold under my watch. But I love what I do. I'm here because I want to be here and I care about the people who work here. I want to do all I can to provide jobs for the people in the community."

Several high school students were present when Friel received her company's award and she encouraged them to look at manufacturing as a career.

"Manufacturing is not a dead-end and dirty job," Friel said. "But manufacturing does have challenges, such as training new workers. But manufacturing can be the lifeblood of the country, and it can really do some wonderful things."

To help attract young workers, Friel said her company has a program where it will pay for employees to go to college.

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