

MEMORIES OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE
COUNCIL-MANAGER FORM OF GOVERNMENT IN
MT. AIRY, NC

BY

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The State of North Carolina, even in 1960, already had a long history of municipal governments utilizing the Council-Manager form of government. According to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) 1998-1999 Membership Directory (the last year municipalities and counties were listed by state and their year of recognition by ICMA), 49 municipalities and nine counties in North Carolina had already been recognized as having the Council-Manager form of local government by ICMA when the Town Board of Commissioners of Mt. Airy decided in mid 1960 that the time had come to change from the Mayor-Council form of local government to the Council-Manager form. The same ICMA document showed that North Carolina had 235 recognized local government jurisdictions having the Council-Manager form of government. Mt. Airy was the first local government jurisdiction in Surry County to adopt the Council-Manager form, The nearest municipalities to Mt. Airy having the Council-Manager form of government at that time were Winston-Salem (1948) and Statesville (1949). In all likelihood, the Town Board had consulted with the Institute of Government (IOG) of UNC-Chapel Hill when it first considered making the change. The IOG staff has always been ready to present objective information about the advantages of the two forms of government to municipal and county governing bodies.

State law in North Carolina at the time allowed a municipality to adopt the Council-Manager form of government by either charter amendment or by ordinance. The Mt. Airy Town Board chose to adopt the new form of government by ordinance.

Mt. Airy in 1961 had approximately 7,055 (the 1960 census figure) citizens and was served by 74 employees. The employees were organized into the following areas at the time of the changeover in 1961, Town Clerk/Finance

(3), Police Department (21), Fire Department (4 + volunteers), Public Works (45), Municipal Court Clerk's Office (1). With the new position of City Manager, that made 75 positions when I came on board on 1 April 1961.

When I saw the advertisement for the position of City Manager for Mt. Airy in the North Carolina League of Municipalities newsletter, in what I believe was late 1960, I was serving as the Assistant to the City Manager of Winston-Salem, John M. Gold, where I had come to work as an Administrative Assistant in the Personnel Department in February 1956, after earning a BA degree in Urban Community and completing the required hours for a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Michigan, but lacking the Grade Point Average to receive it at the time. (I received my MPA degree from the U of M in 1958). I had set a goal of becoming a city manager by the time I was 30 years old and I had turned that age in August of 1960. So when I saw the ad, I was more than ready. My boss, John Gold, was aware of my goal and believed I was well qualified for my first city manager position. He further believed that the Mt. Airy position would be an excellent match for my qualifications and desire. So with his blessing, I sent in my resume and letter of application in January 1961 for the position of City Manager to the Town Board of Commissioners.

The Mayor of Mt. Airy in 1961 was William Carter, a very pleasant and cordial gentlemen in his 60s at the time. He contacted me late in February, inviting me for an interview with the Town Board of Commissioners. The interview went well. The all male Town Board of five members, including the Mayor, was most cordial to me. After the meeting, I was highly encouraged. A few days later, Mayor Carter invited me to meet him for lunch at the Blue View Restaurant in Mt. Airy. This was an even more encouraging event. To my surprise the Mayor was accompanied by the Chair of the Mt. Airy Planning Board, Osler Woltz. Since I never had heard of the jurisdiction planning board chair becoming involved in the appointment of the city manager, I was somewhat puzzled. At that moment, I was unaware of Mr. Woltz's keen interest in all that went on in Mt. Airy or his position as perhaps number one in the Town's informal power structure at that time. Mr. Woltz asked many more questions of me than the Mayor, but both seem pleased with my

answers. Shortly after the first of March, Mayor Carter again called me and this time offered me the position of Mt. Airy's first City Manager. I eagerly accepted the invitation and made arrangements to start work on 4 April 1961.

With many good wishes from my fellow City of Winston-Salem employees and from Mr. Gold, after work on 1 April (April Fools Day), I hitched a ride to Pilot Mountain with a Winston-Salem employee, who lived there. There I met then Mayor Pro-Tem Maynard Beamer and one other Town Board Member, who carried me the rest of the way to Mt. Airy, where I would reside on Orchard St. in a modest rented home, with my first wife and one year old son, Frank, joining me in a few days.

The following Monday morning, I met Mayor Carter at his office in the old Town Hall. The office, quite small, was dominated by a large head and shoulders picture of Andy Griffith, in the guise of the Sheriff of the Town of Mayberry, Mt. Airy's fictional counterpart on prime TV at that time. Stacked on the small desk in the Mayor's Office were several piles of federal government forms. Mayor Carter, with great pride, told me that from now on this would be the City Manager's Office. As an aside, he mentioned that all the forms piled on my new desk had to do with three federal Housing and Home Finance Agency (now Housing and Urban Development Department) programs the Town was applying for, and that I might wish to make the processing of such applications a high work priority.

The Mayor then proceeded to give me a tour of the Town Hall, introducing me to the employees present there, especially the department heads, located in that building. These were Police Chief Howard Sumner, Fire Chief Ed Brannock, Clerk-Treasurer J. C. Hill, and Municipal Court Clerk Tommy Golding. With the exception of Mr. Hill, each seemed genuinely pleased to have me in the Town organization. Mr. Hill was cordial, but formal. The Mayor then drove me over to the Public Works yard, located near the Water Treatment Plant, and introduced me to Public Works Director F. G. Doggett and City Engineer Sam Spencer, who welcomed me to Mt. Airy and the Town organization. Sam and Tommy were the only senior staff members that were

contemporary in age to me. Mr. Hill was old enough to be my grandfather and Chiefs Brannock and Sumner and Mr. Doggett were old enough to be my father.

I had been told by a senior staff member of the North Carolina League of Municipalities that as a first city manager, I would find unique problems in Mt. Airy because of the cultural shock to the Town's staff. And I would find that J. C. Hill would take the change the hardest, for as the person in charge of taking care of the Town's money for more years than most people could remember at that time, he was number one among equals among the Town's department heads. Over the years he had developed his own budgetary preparation procedure and the proposed budget he presented to the Town Board of Commissioners each year was a document of numbers, only he truly could understand. So unless he explained more fully what any of the figures meant, the Town Board was dependent on his judgment for the most part in making its decision on the adoption of the budget. Ultimately this meant that he could award or deny the budgetary requests of the other department heads as he saw fit. This is not to say that he did anything illegal or ever did anything that in his own mind was not for the good of the Town. Having been forewarned, I was aware of what I would have to do to operate effectively as the new City Manager of Mt. Airy.

I was very impressed with the qualifications of all the department heads, taking into consideration the size of Mt. Airy and its annual budget for municipal operations. I was especially impressed with the fact that the Town had not one, not two, but three graduate civil engineers on its staff, two of them with state civil engineer registration certificates. At that time in North Carolina, few municipalities of under 15,000 population had even one graduate civil engineer on its staff, depending exclusively on consulting civil engineering firms for professional civil engineering services. And a new city manager could not ask for more competent Police and Fire Chiefs who also had a desire to work effectively with their new City Manager. And the same could be said for the fifth department head, Tommy Golding the Municipal Court Clerk.

I had, prior to my arrival, decided to conduct an internal organization and management study of the Town of Mt. Airy, in order to identify organization and management improvement needs, so that I could set priorities for improvements in those areas. So during the first two weeks on the job, I asked many questions of all the department heads, as well as asked them to identify what they believed were major organization and management needs related to their own departments. I then took the information gathered and came up with quite a long list of organization and management needs that I wished to address during my first year on the job.

Of course there were many other activities that had to be attended to also, both on and off the job. Before I could organize my own desk and office at the Town Hall. I had to figure out what all the HHFA forms on my desk were all about. After a lengthy review and analysis of the various piles, it became apparent that all the by now thoroughly mixed forms belong to one of three HHFA activities, The Workable Program approval application, the Urban Renewal grant application, and the Public Housing grant application. I separated all the forms into files for each of the aforementioned activities, and placed the files in my project file cabinet drawer. This resulted in a clear desk top, a professional fetish of mine. Now a citizen, Town Commissioner, or staff member could converse with me in my office, without having the impression of my hiding behind a fortress of paper.

I made time to move my wife and son, along with our belongings, to our Orchard St. home. The Mt. Airy News issue announcing my arrival, also had a story about a local man returning from Naval service as a flight surgeon to set up his practice in Mt. Airy. I had not had a true annual physical in several years. So I thought I would contact the newly arrived physician, J. Dale Simmons and make an appointment for a complete baseline physical. Time for my physical was scheduled easily, as it turned out I was Dale's first patient. The physical seemed to me to be routine, but very thorough, with lots a questions posed to me, and much prodding and poking and listening and looking. At the end of the exam, Dale said I was in good health, with the exception of a concern about a lump in the front of my neck he had detected and coupled with answers I had given him earlier related to my medical history and health concerns. He believed I had a thyroid gland problem of

some sort, and, to learn if that was truly so, made an immediate referral to the surgeon whose office was in the same medical office building, Dr. Jackson, across the street from Northern Hospital. Dr. Jackson quickly verified Dale's concern, and called the medical lab at the hospital, requesting a special blood test for me immediately. I then went over to the hospital, where some of my blood was taken and then processed for the requested test. Upon receiving the results, Dr. Jackson asked when I could admit myself to the hospital for surgery. Not liking the prospect of being operated upon and concerned that the initial work I was involved in at Town Hall would suffer in my absence, I exclaimed about all the projects I had already started and how important they were to the Town. This was on a Thursday about three weeks after I had started work. Dr. Jackson interrupted my recitation and told me he would arrange for my admittance to the hospital for the coming Sunday and operate early Monday morning. I figured if he was that concerned, I had better do as he said. So on Friday, I informed the Mayor, Town Board Members and department heads that I was going under the knife early Monday morning, assuring them that I would be back as soon as possible to continue working on projects to help Mt. Airy Town operations become more effective. They all assured me that the first priority was my health, and to not worry about the Town's operations, that they would all pitch in and keep the Town government operations going in the direction I had started.

The operation went off with little inconvenience to me. I awoke in a pleasant semi-private room, with little discomfort and only a small dressing on my neck covering a very small incision site. Under medication, I pleasantly passed the next 48 hours with lots of naps, conversation with my roommate, a very pleasant elderly gentleman from a very rural area in nearby Virginia, and talking with visitors and hospital staff. I was not alarmed over the fact that I had private duty nurses on duty throughout the first two nights, complimenting the excellent hospital staff. John Lockhart, a neighbor up the street, was the Hospital Administrator. The wife of one of the Town's Firefighters was the Nursing Supervisor on my floor of the hospital. The concern of so many persons in Mt. Airy for my personal health problem and recovery was my first contact with the Mt. Airy culture in time of crisis. It

struck a cord in my heart that still vibrates to this day and started my long time love affair with the community.

After 48 hours the decision was made to drop the nighttime special duty nurses, and with the exception of being rushed into the operating room one time to remove blood clots in my incision, a 15 minute painless procedure, my recovery proceeded smoothly, and I was discharged on Friday, with permission to go into the office for a couple of hours on Monday if I felt up to it. At this time of discharge, with my medication level much less, Dr. Jackson explained what my problem had been, what he had done, and his prognosis for me. I had developed a kudzu like malignancy on my thyroid gland, and it had spread to my vocal cords, but that he had removed every trace of it along with a portion of my thyroid gland. Since the malignancy was very low level, I would not need any chemo or radiation therapy. The prognosis was that I would have no further problems with that particular malignancy, other than the minor inconvenience of taking a dally very small artificial thyroid pill, to compensate for the removal of part of my thyroid gland.

I went into work on Monday for a couple of hours and then spent about 10 days of half-day work, then full days with a minimum 30 minute nap at noon time for the next month and then back to my normal work routine.

Once back on a regular work schedule, I began to set priorities of what I hoped to address in the first six months. Besides that there was the very pressing need to prepare a proposed operating budget for the Town for FY 1961-1962. I asked Mr. Hill for a copy of the current fiscal year's budget document. As I suspected, it consisted primarily of columns of numbers accompanied by little explanation and no descriptive material, either for the total document or for any particular departmental budget. In past years it had been Mr. Hill's responsibility to prepare the proposed budget document, based upon the requests of department heads and Mr. Hills decision as to which requests should be honored. The budget document adopted by the Mayor and Town Commissioners, unless answers to questions to him determined otherwise, was pretty much the columns of figures put forth by Mr. Hill.

Since it was now my responsibility to put together the proposed operating budget document, I took the budget requests of the department heads back to my office and began to analyze them, along with revenue data furnished by Mr. Hill. When asked about the amount of unappropriated surplus funds available, Mr. Hill was reluctant to provide me with such information. He finally did, after I half humorously told him that if I had to, I would hold him up by his feet and shake the information out of him. I also assured him that I would make prudent use of any such revenue.

When I was unclear about a department head's request, I would meet with him to find out answers to my questions. Once I had a clear understanding about the requests and the revenue projections for the coming fiscal year, I proceeded to prepare the proposed operating budget document, making sure to include introductory information about the document, summary tables of anticipated revenues and proposed expenditures, and clear expenditure recommendations for each departmental operation or sub-operation, along with the current fiscal year's appropriations, and a capsule explanation of the budget activity under the monetary figures. The end product was a document that could be understood by any interested citizen and news media representative, as well as by the Mayor and Town Board members.

Another matter that needed my priority attention was the Town Code, the document that contained all of the current ordinances in effect for the governing of the Town, truly a most basic item of the Town's operation. Upon asking Mr. Hill, in his additional capacity as Town Clerk, I was chagrined to find out that the closest document of that nature was a single copy of a mid-1930s WPA compilation of all prior adopted ordinances. Since that time, Mr. Hill had inserted between what he determined was the most appropriate pages whatever ordinances or resolutions and motions having the effect of an ordinance the Town Board adopted since. Such information was typed on individual sheets of tissue thin paper. Unfortunately the document was almost useless as a management tool for the following reasons. First, it was a compilation of all existing ordinances at the time it was put together, rather than an orderly codification of ordinances on each subject at that time. Second, Mr. Hill kept the document on the edge of an old fashioned standup bookkeeping desk. Periodically, the compilation document would get

knocked off to the floor spilling out all the inserted later documents. Then Mr. Hill would have to reinsert the subsequent documents back in between the appropriate pages. If pressed for time, he was not always able to reinsert the documents into the correct places. After about 25 years of doing the above insertions and reinsertions, the compilation volume was only valuable as a historical document, if it had ever been more, for even Mr. Hill had great difficulty finding a specific ordinance that could be relied upon to stand up in a court of law.

So, working with the two Assistant Town Attorneys, John C. W. and Carrol Gardner over the next two months or so, an entirely fresh Town Code was drafted for the consideration of the Town Board. Resources used were a select few other North Carolina municipal codes and judicious use of the ordinances passed since the mid-1930s, along with the legal and management knowledge of the three of us.

Historically, municipal code publishing firms printed municipal codes and periodic updates on unique sized pages, thereby guaranteeing a continual source of revenue on their part, while inconveniencing municipalities between update printings. I was able to negotiate an agreement with the Municipal Code Corporation, a fairly young firm still working on finding a competitive niche in the field of code publication, to print the code on standard 8.5" by 11" 3-hole punched stationary, thereby allowing the firm of Town Attorneys to update the code whenever needed in an expeditious and economical manner. Most municipal code publication firms now use the 8.5" by 11" 3-hole punched format for their publications. So Mt. Airy set the trend for the entire nation.

Another of the early improvements, related to orderly codification of ordinances, was the effective use of time spent in Town Board Meetings. Under the prior Mayor-Council form of government, there was a very loose town Board Meeting agenda concept, with Mr. Hill as Town Clerk and each member of the Board bringing up what he felt was of importance to the Town, once the meeting was opened by the Mayor, the minutes of the last meeting approved, Mr. Hill, as Town Treasurer, made his financial report, and any old business was attended to or deferred until the next Town Board

Meeting. With a new item of business, often the other persons at the Town Board Meeting had no background information on the subject prior to the presentation at the meeting, making it difficult to objectively discuss the matter at hand and come to an objective and speedy resolution of the matter. Also, if the ultimate action on a matter was an ordinance, an ordinance amendment, or a resolution, the matter often had to be deferred until the next meeting, so that the City Attorney or one of his Assistants would have time to compose the proposed legal document for formal consideration. All of these factors often lead to long and frustrating meetings, sometimes resulting in complicating the matters at hand, rather than resolving them. Being aware of these problems and observing a good many of them at my first Town Board Meeting, with the blessing of the Town Board, I designed a more formal agenda, based upon items that the Mayor, Town Board Members, the Town Clerk, and the department heads brought to my attention, as well as requirements outlined in the state statutes for the municipalities to abide by. On the new agenda, old and new proposed ordinances came first, after the meeting opening matters were taken care of. Then came old and new resolutions, and finally ordinary old and new motions requiring Town Board consideration. Working with the Town Attorney and his two Assistants, all ordinances and resolutions to be considered were included in the agenda package. I prepared the ordinary proposed motions. I also provided a cover memorandum for each ordinance, resolution and motion, for the last as part of the motion itself, which provided necessary information and a recommendation from me on action to be taken. The agenda packages were delivered to the Mayor and Town Commissioners at least 72 hours prior to a Town Board Meeting, so that the Mayor and Town Commissioners would have time to review and analyze them prior to the meetings. Also the two local newspapers at that time, the Mt. Airy News and the Mt. Airy Times were provided with copies, so that they might, if the paper's schedule allowed, run a story on the upcoming meeting for the information of any interested citizens. The new agenda procedure worked well, especially once all parties involved became comfortable with it. Town Board Meeting agenda matters soon were handled with dispatch, while allowing for intelligent and objective debate.

The anticipated urban renewal and public housing programs successfully evolved over the first 18 months of the Council-Manager form of government, with patience and hard work on the parts of many persons and the cooperation of the federal government.

The first step was to work on filling out all the forms related to the Workable Program certification by the federal government, which was necessary prior to being authorized to apply for urban renewal and public housing grants. The Mayor, Town Board Members, and department heads provided me with the information needed to fill out the forms, which I did, following the letter and intent of the many pages of instructions that came with the forms. Upon review of the application by the Atlanta Regional Office of the HHFA, I received a telephone call from a staff member of that agency, announcing that he would come to Mt. Airy shortly to help the Town amend the Workable Program application by including key words and phrases which would guarantee approval by the final reviewing senior staff member. He also implied that we might also have included more detail than necessary in some areas of application, though the thoroughness was much appreciated by the Regional Office staff, who often had to contend with too little information on such applications. After reworking the application and having the revision approved by the Town Board, the Workable Program Application was resubmitted to the HHFA through its Atlanta Regional Office and subsequently approved in relatively short order.

This opened the way to formally establish local urban renewal, called redevelopment under North Carolina law, and public housing programs in Mt. Airy. Most municipalities with such programs established separate lay Redevelopment Commissions and Housing Authorities to oversee the respective programs, but I believed that because the two programs would have to work in close harmony, it would make better sense to have a joint operation with separate lay boards providing oversight duties. Because of the complexities of the two programs, especially when there was a need to coordinate them, most municipalities either retained consultants or hired a staff expert to be the manager of each program. I believed that Mt. Airy would be better off, especially with a single lay body providing the oversight of both programs, to have a single staff expert locally provide the

management expertise. I prevailed upon the Town Board and the lay body over both programs to go this route. And after advertising the position in appropriate publications, recommended the hiring of Ledford Austin, a mid-management staff member with HHFA. Ledford, a contemporary in age to myself, had a sterling reputation at HHFA for accomplishing goals. Once Ledford arrived, he soon had both programs going and federal funds soon became available.

The qualifying for federal Urban Renewal and Public Housing funds, through the submission and approval emphasized even more than my initial analysis that Mt. Airy needed a Comprehensive Plan in order to provide the community and its elected Town Board with the knowledge that would allow objective decisions to be made regarding the Town's development in the most effective manner. A comprehensive plan would consist of a Population and Economy Study, an Existing Land Use Analysis, a Land Use Plan, a Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, a Major Thoroughfare Plan, a Community Facilities Plan, a Public Improvements Plan, and a Long Range Capital Improvements Plan. Since there were no professional urban planners on the Town's staff and the preparation of a comprehensive plan was complex and time consuming, the logical route to pursue was the retention of professional planning consultants. This especially seemed logical because the State of North Carolina had an active program of providing professional planning staff consultants for municipalities at a very reasonable fee. I recommended this approach and both the Town Planning Board and the Town Board of Commissioners approved my recommendation. The State's planning consultants were soon hard at work preparing the various components of the Comprehensive Plan. All were finished within my first year, with local assistance from City Engineer Sam Spencer, whom I had appointed to the additional position of Planning Coordinator, Ledford Austin, and me. The Town Planning Board recommended and the Town Board of Commissioners formally adopted the relevant components.

Establishing a sound budget management system only made the need for an up to date financial management system to be established in the areas of purchasing and accounting most apparent. Purchasing operations had been pretty much left up to the department heads to do, within the limits of

their approved budgets. The Town Board entered the picture on major equipment purchases. For most non-major equipment purchases, each department head negotiated the best price possible, giving preference to local vendors whenever possible. However there were no uniform purchasing management policies or regulations in place, other than the State Statutes referring to formal purchases of major equipment and similar items of expenditure. Using my knowledge and experience, I prepared purchasing regulations and purchase requisition and purchase order forms for all Town operations, and told Mr. Hill, that as part of his Finance Director's duties, he would also be the Purchasing Agent for the Town. While he had hoped that I would take on the Purchasing Agent duties, as many other small community city managers did in North Carolina, he accepted my decision with good grace. The other department heads accepted the Purchasing Management regulations with enthusiasm, since it made their jobs easier and eliminated problems of local and out of town vendors pressuring them. It provided ammunition for them to deny requests for preferential treatment. It also provided savings for the Town in the bulk purchase of common items such as office supplies and gasoline.

Prior to installing the Purchasing Management System, I had had the experience of one local office supplier testing the waters for preferential purchasing. He openly asked me what my price was to guarantee his firm all the Town's office supply business. When I told him it would be \$1,000,000.00, he backed off with the remark that I was in deed serious about getting the best prices for the Town through competitive bidding. Subsequently the prices he quoted in bids were less than he quoted prior to my coming to town. He received purchase orders when his prices were the lowest quoted.

The accounting code used by Mr. Hill and the related financial reporting seemed to me to be out of date and somewhat in conflict with the budgetary codes I had utilized for the operating budget. This situation would only cause more problems for the Town. Since I did not claim to be an accounting expert by a long shot, I told Mr. Hill that I would contact the North Carolina Local Government Commission (NCLGC), the financial advisory body for local government jurisdictions in the state, and request that it send its

Field Representative to Mt. Airy to update the Town's accounting code and procedures. This was a no fee service provided by the state in order to keep local government jurisdictions out of hot water in the area of financial affairs.

The person doing the primary field work for the NCLGC was B. L. "Bob" McKenzie, who I happened to have been in a stock club with in Winston-Salem in the late 1950s. Bob, who was only a few years older than I, had an undergraduate degree in accounting and had been with the NCLGC for several years, after having been a staff accountant with Western Electric in Winston-Salem. While I knew Mr. Hill would test Bob's knowledge, as well as his patience, Bob proved more than a match for Mr. Hill on local government financial matters, and in a short time he was hard at work designing an accounting code and procedures for the Town that even Mr. Hill agreed was an improvement and made his work easier to boot. It also meshed perfectly with my budget code. Bob also made several helpful suggestions in the area of billing and collections which improved those aspects of the Town's financial operation.

This left only the area of human resources management, or personnel management as it was referred to back then, to improve. When I arrived, there was no formal personnel management system relating to the employees of the Town. It was pretty much up to the individual department heads to handle the personnel management problems involving their employees. The Town Board over the years had formally established the holidays for the Town's employees and established minimal regulations on vacation and sick leave, but beyond that and compliance with miscellaneous state and federal statutes, there was really no uniform system of personnel management there. With employee salaries and existing rudimentary fringe benefits taking up a good majority of the Town's budget, as is so in all local government jurisdictions, it was high time to have a comprehensive and contemporary personnel management system.

So, I drafted a comprehensive personnel ordinance/personnel regulations for the Town Board's consideration. This addressed, among other items,

recruitment, selection, position classification, pay, fringe benefits, and employee development (evaluation, training and education, and counseling).

Having worked with the Personnel Department in Winston-Salem on many of the above mentioned aspects of personnel management, I believed that I was well qualified to install the remainder of a top-notch personnel management system for the Town.

I first then conducted a Position Classification Study of the 74 full time employees of the Town. This resulted in a formal Position Classification Plan that grouped employees doing the same or very similar duties into the same position class. The final plan composed of the necessary one to two page position class descriptions presented in written form the descriptions for all job classes with general description, primary representative duties, required knowledge, skills, and abilities, and educational and work experience desired for the position class. This information would be helpful, not only to the individual employees, but to any interested citizen, news media representatives, and Town Board Members. It would also allow for a more orderly detailed description by position class title of personal services expenses in the annual operating budget.

Based upon the Position Classification Plan, a Pay Plan was then designed, with a series of interrelated pay ranges assigned to the Position Classes, primarily based upon information from the NC League of Municipalities Annual Salary Survey of North Carolina Municipal Salaries for similar sized municipalities and relevant near by municipalities. This data was also of value to the same groups as the Position Classification Plan, and would be used also in the annual operating budget. The Plan was also organized for utilization of the merit raise concept, based upon an annual employee evaluation.

An employee development policy was developed that established an interrelationship among the factors of employee evaluation, employee training and education, and employee counseling, with the goal of having each employee's best qualifications fully developed, as well as resolving each employee's problems that affected their job abilities.

Existing fringe benefit practices were carefully reviewed and analyzed to make sure that they would be uniformly applied in all departments and to identify additional fringe benefits of an important nature that were not presently provided. The primary deficit in this area was a lack of a retirement plan for the non-uniform employees. This was rectified by having the Town Board ultimately approve membership in the NC Local Government Employees Retirement System for such employees.

A Personnel Regulations Ordinance was then prepared to formally cover all aspects of the Town's personnel management system as mentioned above at the beginning of the discussion of the personnel management system.

The above activities during the first year of my tenure as City Manager pretty much took care of the general management and planning systems for the Town. But there were also opportunities to further improve the organization, management, and/or operations of the individual departments of the Town. Following are representative actions taken for the various operations of the Town.

In the newly established Finance Department, tax collections had historically emphasized voluntary compliance of payment of taxes owed, both on real property and on personal property. While over the years this policy had provided enough tax revenue to the Town for operational purposes, when combined with other sources of municipal revenue provided for, it also resulted in a longer and longer delinquent property tax list, and the ultimate loss of many tax dollars due to legal expiration of tax obligations and persons and businesses owing taxes on personal property moving from Mt. Airy. This was an unfair burden to those citizens and business which kept their municipal property tax obligations up to date. So with the approval of the Town Board and the assistance of the City Attorney, the Town sent out notices to all delinquent taxpayers requesting that they pay up immediately or contact the Town's Finance Director to negotiate regular partial payments until their delinquency was resolved. The legal right of the Town to ultimately foreclose on real property and confiscate personal property for delinquent taxes was also mentioned. Many accounts on file were resolved voluntarily after the letters went out and the addition of more delinquent

accounts slowed markedly over the following months. And once the Town's Tax Collector, an appointee of the Town Board, but now under the administrative supervision of the Finance Director, understood the new Town policy he took a proactive stance in his work, rather than passively waiting for the tax revenue to come in by itself. Rather than serve as a "Tax Receiver," he became a true Tax Collector.

Upon looking at the current fiscal year's budget when I first came to town, I noted a line item for payment of rent for parking lots. This amount was of a significant nature to my way of thinking. Since I knew of no municipal parking lots at that time, I inquired of Mr. Hill, what the appropriation was for. The answer was that the Town was renting a large parking lot behind Main St. for the use of customers of the downtown merchants. Even more questionable in my mind was the rental of land for a parking lot for the employees of a local industry. I pointed out to the Town Board that the Town had set a bad precedent in the two above rental actions, since merchants in other areas of the Town and other industries in Town could request that the Town provide like parking facilities for them. With the Board's approval I notified the Merchants Association and the industry in question that beginning the first day of the new Fiscal Year, July 1, that the Town would no longer subsidize their parking needs. The industry accepted the announcement with good grace, understanding the position it had put the Town in. The Merchants Association, however, pleaded poverty and said that without the large downtown parking lot for its members' customers, their businesses would shrivel on the vine. Fortunately the Town Board did not give in to the Merchants Association and back down from its recent decision. As I had expected, the Merchants Association picked up the rental agreement with the parking lot property owners in late June, and the large parking area behind Main St. remained open for the customers of the merchants.

Working with Police Chief Howard Sumner was a joy. While a dedicated law enforcement professional, he did not display the super ego that many police chiefs have. Neither did he see the position of City Manager as a personal or professional threat to himself or his department. In fact it was just the opposite. He was delighted to see someone in authority take such an interest in improving the effectiveness of the Police Department in a professional

manner. I expect that he was privately relieved to have had the Town Board Member who had been assigned oversight responsibility for Police Department operations and believed, as "Police Commissioner," he had the authority to make management decisions for the department from time to time, replaced by a City Manager who knew how to work with department heads as a knowledgeable, supportive, and objective superior, While the "Police Commissioner" may have believed he was helping the Town and its Police Department, he did not realize that by attempting to exercise such beliefs, he was sending mixed messages to the members of that department, and creating additional problems for the Police Chief.

One of the first problems Chief Sumner brought to my attention was the public relations problem he had convincing citizens, the local news media, and even some Town Board Members that the 21 person Police Department was not overly large for a town of 7,000 persons. While fellow city managers in North Carolina and elsewhere of communities approximately the same size as Mt. Airy, and even up to twice the size in some instances, were envious of the size Police Department I had to work with, the fault was with their governing bodies not realizing that their municipalities' police departments were too small to be effective, rather than Mt. Airy's Police Department being too large.

What most persons do not realize is that it takes approximately five positions, especially in smaller police departments, to maintain one officer on duty 24 hours a day seven days a week. This is because when scheduling uniform operations (patrol and traffic control) one must take into consideration days off, vacation leave, sick leave, training and education time away from primary duties, and time tied up in inferior and superior courts away from normal duties. In the Mt. Airy Police Department (MAPD) in 1961 and 1962 the twenty-one positions included the Police Chief, who also served as the primary investigative officer, records and reports officer, and evidence technician, four desk officers (the Police Captain or one of the Police Sergeants and sometimes a basic Police Officer) who primarily handled shift supervision, telephone calls, dispatching, and walk-in requests for service or information. The Police Captain also assisted the Chief with investigative and related duties. Two Non-Moving Traffic Violation

Enforcement Officers (Meter Maids to most citizens) filled the remaining two positions. This meant that there were 15 positions assigned to field operations, which when divided by 5 came out to an average of three officers being available around the clock. A minimum of two officers had to be in the field at all times, in order to provide backup for the primary officer responding to a call. On the heavier service shifts, evenings and all three shifts on Saturdays, you would want a minimum of four officers to handle the workload in the field.

Another matter of concern to Chief Sumner was the lack of ammunition for firearms training, especially the service revolvers of the department personnel. Although Chief Sumner requested budgetary funds each year for service revolver ammunition for firearms training, Mr. Hill had eliminated the request each year in the final operating budget proposal to the Town Board. This had been happening for approximately 15 years, which meant that a high percentage of the Police Department's personnel never had any official live fire training with their service revolvers and no personnel had any official live fire training within the past 15 years.

I assured the Chief that I would see that funds were provided for comprehensive firearms training in the operating budget for FY 1961-1962. The Town Board included those funds in the adopted operating budget.

Because of my concern about the long time lack of firearms training, the Chief and I made it a very high priority for the MAPD in the new fiscal year. The Chief arranged for the use of a small arms firing range that one of the Surry County Deputy Sheriffs had built on his farm property. Upon learning that the NC State Highway Patrol Officer assigned to Surry County was the SHP Revolver Marksmanship Champion, I requested his services as a firearms instructor for the planned MAPD Firearms Training Program. The SHP Superintendent readily agreed to my request.

The first thing the Firearms Training Instructor did, once the program got underway was to inspect all the revolvers carried by the MAPD officers. Upon doing so, he found one revolver without a firing pin and another

revolver with a bent barrel. The first would not have been able to fire, and the second would have blown up upon being fired. The first was repaired and the second replaced.

The instructor spent a good deal of time taking the MAPD personnel through a highly detailed curriculum, always stressing safety. Because of this, there had been no accidents during the training, that is until the segment dealing with combat draw and firing.

I decided to observe the combat or "fast" draw training out at the firing range. The Firearms Instructor started that phase of training by emphasizing the cardinal safety rule of the combat draw and firing. It was, "Never put your trigger finger within the trigger guard of your weapon until the barrel of it is parallel to the ground or floor." This rule of operation, when followed faithfully, would prevent a police officer from pulling the much repeated error of the fictional Deputy Sheriff of Mayberry (The Andy Griffith Show), Barney Fife, that of pulling the trigger on his service revolver prior to its clearing his holster. While Barney only became highly embarrassed and had to empty his revolver of ammunition and carry one round in his uniform shirt pocket, in reality it could cause a wound to a foot.

With each stage of the Combat Draw and Firing training the Firearms Instructor reiterated the cardinal rule. Finally it was time to load the revolvers with live ammunition and fully apply the Combat Draw and Firing training. One last time, the Instructor repeated the cardinal rule.

The Instructor then gave the command to draw weapons and fire six rounds at the target to the first element of the class. And then it happened, before anyone in that element had the opportunity to clear their holsters with their weapons, much less start firing. "BLAM." exploded one revolver, followed by an astonished, "Yeow!" from one of the students, a Police Sergeant, no less. The Instructor gave the, "Cease Fire!" order and ran over the Police Sergeant, who was in a state of shock and chagrin. He had pulled a true, "Barney Fife." Fortunately the bullet, upon leaving his revolver, which was still in his holster missed the Sergeant's foot, taking a chunk of shoe welt on the right hand side of his right shoe as the only damage, but giving

the Sergeant the scare of his life, before giving him the embarrassment of his life. Believing that this incident needed reinforcing, not only for the Sergeant, but for the rest of the departmental personnel. I instructed the Police Chief to, after the training session was over, have the Sergeant remove all cartridges from his revolver and carry one cartridge in his left uniform shirt pocket, ala Barney Fife for a period of 24 hours. This was a far more serious disciplinary action than a written reprimand or even a one day suspension without pay. For the "word" soon got around town as to what happened, and the Sergeant was ribbed unmercifully about immolating Barney Fife.

The firearms training paid off. Within a few months, a MAPD officer who stopped by a small grocery store, while on patrol, witnessed a robbery in progress. Upon drawing his weapon and ordering the robber to put down his gun and get on the floor to be arrested and handcuffed, the robber instead fired a shot at the police officer, fortunately missing him. Both the police officer and the robber then took refuge behind pyramidal stacks of canned goods and proceeded to trade shots. The officer, because of his recent firearms training, was able to shortly wound the robber in the arm. The robber then melodramatically yelled, "Don't shoot, copper! You got me." Television and movies seemed to be influencing law enforcement in Mt. Airy.

A couple of law enforcement incidents that reinforced the justification for such a "large" Police Department for Mt. Airy at the time are worth mentioning. Both were related to the culture of the area at the time.

The first was connected to the mystique of the transportation of bootleg alcohol, the basis for stock car and drag racing of souped up automobiles. At the time I lived in Mt. Airy, US 52 between Mt. Airy and Pilot Mountain had only been open for a comparatively short period of time. Because of the comparatively sparse traffic on the road, especially in the evenings, a group of young men and woman in their late teens and twenties decided that the dual lane and straight sections of US 52 would be ideal for a combination of stock car and drag racing. So without any permission this group periodically would close down a section of the highway that appealed to them, stopping

all traffic with threats of dire consequence, and then would hold races for an hour or two. Naturally, the first time complaints were received by the MAPD, a coordinated attempt was made to stop the illegal action of those racing fans. A task force of MAPD, Surry County Sheriff's Department, Pilot Mt. Police Department and NC State Highway Patrol officers was formed to resolve the issue. It soon became apparent that advanced (for the time) communications technology was hampering the effectiveness of the task force in stopping the illegal racing activity. The racers had figured out how to alter a WWII surplus tank radio, so that it would become a rudimentary police scanner. They would, upon hearing of police activity involving an attempt to catch them in the act, call off any illegal activity before any law enforcement units could arrive on the scene. I joined a meeting of the task force at which a solution to the scanning of law enforcement radio communications was being discussed. I had been attracted to books on WW II and the Korean War for recreational reading for some time. This experience caused a proverbial light bulb to go off within my mind. I suggested that a special code be devised to communicate over the radio to pass information about the illegal racing, based upon the "10" Code (the well publicized, through movies and TV, code of law enforcement agencies nationally, the most known to the general public being, "10-4"). When preceded by a special code word, key "10" Code numbers would have very different meanings related to the illegal racing and its resolution. The task force adopted this idea, working out the necessary procedures. Shortly thereafter the task force was able to arrive at the scene of an illegal race and arrest key players involved, thereby stopping the private use of a major thoroughfare for use of a culturally accepted recreational activity.

The second experience related to the fact that for some visitors to Mt. Airy, the town was a high pressure cooker of activities and regulations. These visitors for 29 days a month led a quiet and peaceful existence in the lovely hills and mountains of North Carolina and Virginia adjacent to Mt. Airy, interacting with no one other than family members and perhaps an occasional neighbor or two. On the 30th day a trip to the "big city" of Mt. Airy was necessary for the purchase of goods and services, before return to a bucolic setting.

The pressures felt by these visitors to Mt. Airy caused them often to be antisocial to the extreme, resisting laws and ordinances that normally played no part in their lives, leery of unaccustomed strangers, and generally unable to cope with new and unexpected experiences. Such antisocial behavior often frightened the citizens of Mt. Airy, who were only too glad to have police officers available to keep the peace. An example of this was the incident on Main St. at the Post Officer intersection. One day, in the early afternoon as I recall, the traffic control signal light changed from green to yellow, causing one of the visitors from the very rural area to slam on the brakes of his car, coming to an instant stop. A local citizen in the car behind him did not react quite fast enough, gently clicking his front bumper with the rear bumper of the visitor's car. Under the above mentioned pressures the visitor succumbed to an early version of the now popular road rage, got out of his car to meet the citizen who had got out of his car to see what, if any, damage he had caused, and was stabbed in the abdominal region by the visitor, who could not handle the unexpected, if really insignificant action that had taken place. Fortunately, the MAPD response was almost instantaneous, and the visitor was arrested before he could do more damage to the citizen.

Another practice that required police attention beyond the usual services of an officer as bailiff for the Municipal Court, the inferior court serving Mt. Airy at the time, was the tendency of visitors from the very rural areas to look upon Municipal Court sessions as an opportunity for free entertainment, or to rest in a convenient location, including taking naps, or eat a sack lunch, or converse with a friend they hadn't seen for a spell. Some, rather than sit on the Court Room pew seating, would hunker down along the walls, impeding the movement of normal Court Room traffic.

A third example of a need for more police services actually took place a year or so before I came to live in Mt. Airy, but it illustrates the point also. With friends, I was visiting Mt. Airy and we pulled in to a metered parking space on Main St. in the central business district. Upon getting out of the car, we were told by three very large, very rural men, who had been standing in the gutter area conversing with each other, that this was their parking space, since they had fed the parking meter. Even though they had no vehicle in it,

they believed that taking such action gave them the use of such space for their socializing.

When I first arrived in Mt. Airy as City Manager, the Police Department had no radar speed detection devices, because Mr. Hill again, like the ammunition, did not believe this to be worthy of inclusion in the annual operating budget proposal to the Town Board. This did not mean that the MAPD did not enforce the speed control regulations.

Wrenn Ave. is an attractive connector street between two major thoroughfares, having few intersections, wider than most residential streets, and almost straight. It is also a very attractive residential street, who's occupants did not appreciate speeding. Upon receiving a service request for enforcement of speeding violations on Wrenn Ave. and passing it on to Chief Sumner, I asked him how he planned to put a stop to the speeding, without a radar speed detector in his department's inventory. He invited me to observe how he was going to accomplish the fete. At dusk that day, using my personal automobile for the sake of not being conspicuous, we parked in the driveway of a house about half-way down Wrenn Ave. whoes occupants were away on a trip, with a MAPD police car parked without lights at each end of the street. When a car passed us at a speed significantly over the well marked speed limit for the street, Chief Sumner would make an accurate "Eyeball" calculation of the speed. He would then radio the appropriate police unit to stop the vehicle and charge the driver with a speeding violation citation. I asked the Chief if he had any problem in Municipal Court with legal challenges to departmental citations involving his "Eyeball" speed calculations. He answered that he was considered an expert witness by the Municipal Court and the Superior Court having jurisdiction over Mt. Airy, and few defense attorney's took the time to challenge his expertise. Before I left Mt. Airy, the MAPD had a radar speed detector.

Chief Sumner and I, working together, implemented many other operational improvements for the MAPD. I was indeed fortunate to have such a well qualified and dedicated Police Chief on my staff, one who helped me gain additional knowledge about law enforcement organization, management, and operations.

Important to the MAPD was the operation of the Municipal Court, in front of which all misdemeanors and preliminary hearings on felonies came. When I arrived in Mt. Airy, the incumbent Judge of the Municipal Court had been in that elected position for 20 years or so, handily defeating opponents in periodic elections. While his judicial policies may have been entertaining to some, to the MAPD, he was a serious frustration. It appeared that he enjoyed berating MAPD officers whenever possible in his court, placing the officers in a dilemma of making arrests that would go before the Judge and suffer his slings and arrows, or ignoring minor violations of the law or settling them with warnings or other non-judicial resolution. The Judge had over the years come to have his favorites among the local bar, allowing them lenience in there court room tactics, while not granting this privilege to those not in his favor. He also insisted on creating a court room environment that in a positive term would be called, "Very relaxed." His favorite attorneys could dress as casually as they wished. There was a large feed and seed calendar on the wall and a spittoon by his judicial bench. Dust, dirt, and grime provided a questionable patina upon the Court Room surfaces. Court Room spectators were allowed for the most part to converse, nap, eat a snack or a sack lunch, and leave and reenter the Court Room as they pleased. All this added up to a great lack of judicial decorum, and provided a poor image of judicial justice in Mt. Airy. But the Judge ignored criticism without fear, for the voters had provided him with a strong sense of career security over the course of many an election. And then the totally unexpected happened. He lost the election that took place after I had assumed the role of City Manager.

Carrol Gardner, a promising young attorney, approximately my age, who was serving as one of the two part-time Assistant Town Attorneys. decided that it was time to stop the Mount Airy Municipal Court from being a mockery of professional judicial justice. While the incumbent Judge believed that the young upstart would receive the same electoral decision that his many opponents had over his many years in office. He was not concerned, much less worried about the impending election. But Carrol Gardner worked diligently to show the voters of the Municipal Court jurisdiction that he would replace the Surry County's version of the infamous "law west of the Pecos" provided by the western judicial legend, Judge Roy Bean, with a

contemporary, effective, and just court system that would treat all those who came before him equally. And the results of the election surprised many of the local politicians, most of all the heretofore incumbent Judge.

I immediately met with the Judge-elect to discuss changes I would like to make in the Court Room, including removal of the feed and seed calendar and spittoon, cleaning of floors, pew benches, walls, light fixtures, and windows, and repainting of the walls and ceilings. The Judge-elect enthusiastically agreed to my concepts. As soon as the incumbent Judge vacated the Municipal Court, I had the Public Works Director assign a good sized crew to the tasks I had discussed with the Judge-elect. Once the dust, dirt and grime, along with skeletal remains of a large number of various bugs, were removed and a new coat of paint put on the walls and trim in colors chosen by Municipal Judge to be Carrol Gardner, the old dowdy Municipal Court room much more reflected the dignity and decorum that most people expected.

Judge Gardner, in his first Municipal Court session, laid down new regulations of behavior for officers of the Court, defendants, and spectators. These included professional dress for officers of the Court, including defense attorneys, that attorneys conduct themselves in a professional manner before the Court, that spectators not talk, nap, or eat in the court room, that all spectators be seated on the pew benches (no standing at the back of the Court Room or "hunkering" against the side aisle walls), and that once a spectator left the Court Room, that spectator would not be allowed back into the Court Room, while the Court was in session. To enforce the regulations having to do with spectators, I had Chief Sumner assigned two of his physically impressive police officers as additional Court Bailiffs for the first month of the new Judge's tenure. The change in the level of the Municipal Court public image shortly thereafter was most gratifying to all concerned.

Transportation (then called Traffic) Engineering has a direct bearing on the enforcement of and education about traffic law enforcement. While Mr. Doggett, Public Works Director and Chief Sumner had done their best to see that traffic control signs and pavement/curb markings, and traffic control signals (traffic lights) were properly installed, over the years, with

budgetary and time limitations, and with occasional capricious decisions of the Town Board, the state of transportation engineering on the non-State Highway Department streets within the Town Limits left something to be desired.

Perhaps the most noticeable shortcoming in transportation engineering was the wide variety and condition of traffic control signs throughout the Town. Some were faded, some were rusting, some were bent, some were on utility poles instead of individual posts (a danger to utility employees climbing such poles and a potential liability to the Town), some were out of date, some bore non-current standard messages, and some were useless. All these situations contributed to making it difficult for a vehicle driver to easily comprehend what the Town was trying to tell him or her regarding traffic control. It also presented a negative visual impression of the Town's effectiveness.

After a survey of all the Town's traffic control signs, I concluded that it would be most effective, of the alternatives available, to have the town purchase a table top traffic control sign maker along with the related supplies (sign blanks and generic sign legends meeting contemporary standards). The purchase of the application device and supplies was approved by the Town Board in the FY 1961-62 operating budget.

New sign faces (customized by the person making up the sign faces for the various speed control and parking regulations) were vacuum sealed to sign blanks (either new or over suitable existing signs of standard size after cleaning the existing face). Slowly but surely after several months of the new fiscal year had passed. all traffic control signs in Mt. Airy met the accepted standards of the Institute of Traffic Engineers. And with uniformity in size, legend, and location, The signs made it easier for drivers to understand the Town's traffic control regulations and presented a much more professional picture of the Town's interest in contemporary traffic control practices to the public. Even with the addition of needed signage, there was a net reduction of signs in Mt. Airy, due to the removal of superfluous signs, such as the multitude of "Slow, Children Playing," signs on a great many residential streets. The proliferation of such signs had made

there messages impotent. And there was always the question, "What are the children doing playing in the street?"

Fire Chief Ed Brannock headed up a combined professional (4 personnel) and volunteer (about 30 personnel on the roll with about 15 active) fire department. The Mt. Airy Fire Department (MAFD), like most small town fire departments, had unique assets and unique liabilities.

Chief Brannock had turned what had been a storage closet into his office, which with a small desk, a desk chair and one guest chair was filled to capacity. The filing cabinets for his office were located outside of the office. At the same time, there was a small room off the apparatus floor that would have been ideal for the Chief's Office, but was being used as the social center for volunteer firefighters, both active and retired, especially the latter, who played endless games of checkers and/or kibitzed about the current checker game and/or conversed at length about whatever was the hot topic of the moment. In today's vernacular, it would be called, "Hanging with their buds."

I suggested to the Chief that he take off the larger space as his office, with the present office then serving as a supply closet. Recognizing that I had had no experience with a fire department that was still highly dependent on a volunteer firefighting force, he attempted to explain the dynamics of such an organization. The social room and the never ending checker game were long and strong traditions of the MAFD, and if he took over that room for his office, he would encounter all sorts of personnel problems with the volunteer firefighter force. He pointed out that the core of the checker players, the more senior retired volunteers, had dwindled to only about three or four, due to health problems and the normal aging process. Once they no longer came to the social room on a daily basis, he would then be able to take the room over for his office without creating manpower problems for the MAFD. Learning this, I postponed what I originally believed was a splendid idea.

The Volunteers on the MAFD were compensated through a modest fee structure for attendance at fire scenes. The money for such fees was

budgeted in the Towns annual operating budget, based upon the Chief's best estimate.

At the end of March in FY 1961-62, Chief Brannock informed me that the operating budget line item for Volunteer Firefighter Fees was exhausted. I told him that upon having any additional fee payments for the remaining three months of the fiscal year, I would ask the Town Board to authorize a transfer from the Contingency Account of the budget to the Fire Department Function to take care of that fiscal obligation.

But there were no more fires in Mt. Airy for the next three months, which saved me from having to request the above budget amendment. This seemed a little strange to me, but I put it out of my mind while preparing the FY 1962-63 Operating Budget Proposal, which of course included a line item for Volunteer Firefighter Fees in the Fire Department Function, such expenditure to be used starting July 1, 1962.

When the first fire of the new fiscal year happened on July 1 and others followed at a pace similar to recent past years, according to Chief Brannock, I puzzled over the coincidence of having fires stop when the money ran out for Volunteer Firefighter fees on March 31, and started up promptly on July 1, when new money became available for payment of fees to the Volunteer Firefighters. I called Chiefs Brannock and Sumner to my office and told them that the fire schedule and available fees were too neatly scheduled to be just a coincidence, and that I suspected that arson might be involved. The two Chiefs agreed with my thinking and told me that they would conduct a discreet joint investigation into the matter.

About a month later the two Chiefs reported to me that they had determined that arson indeed had been involved in the fire schedule and that the culprit was one of the Volunteer Firefighters. They made an arrest shortly thereafter and the alleged arsonist's guilt was determined. He had decided that the Volunteer Firefighter Fees would provide him with additional income, as well as satisfy his need for recognition in the community as a firefighter. Chief Brannock told me that every year in the United States, there were similar incidents in other places. While he tried

very hard to determine if an applicant for a position with the MAFD, paid or volunteer was stable from an emotional standpoint, there were times when he was wrong about a man, but this was the first time he was aware of an arsonist being a member of the MAFD.

On Saturdays, a formal day off from work for me, I often took my son Franky with me to my office at the Town Hall, while I took care of a few things left over from the week just past and laid plans for the week to come, without the interruptions of visitors and telephone calls. After taking care of business in the office, I would then take Franky to look at the fire trucks, which were housed at the Town Hall on the apparatus floor of the MAFD.

Franky, now into his third year of life in the late winter of 1962, was enthralled by the fire apparatus and never more happy than when he was behind the wheel of MAFD Pumper Truck No. 1. He would pretend he was driving the truck, making his own motor noises. This particular Saturday, with several people socializing just off the apparatus floor and with the apparatus doors to the outside closed because of the still chilly temperatures, Franky was inspired to add more realism to his fantasy by sounding the siren. Somehow he figured out which button on the dashboard activated the siren and turned it on. While everyone else in the immediate vicinity was startled by the extremely loud roar of the siren, Franky had the most satisfied look of accomplishment on his face that I had ever seen.

Chief Brannock was also the Electrical Code Enforcement Officer for the Town, inspecting all new and major renovation electrical systems installation work. When I found out that he was hampered to some extent in doing a first class job of enforcing sound electrical system installations by an outdated electrical code, we worked on the adoption by reference of the BOCA (Building Officials and Codes Administrators) nationally recognized contemporary Electrical Code. We presented our recommendation for an ordinance adopting the BOCA Electrical Code, with local tailored enforcement procedures to the Town Board of Commissioners and they adopted it. This assured the Town of having effective and safe electrical systems installations.

An interesting technology aside was based in the Fire Department in 1961. With summer in full swing, I needed to travel to Chapel Hill for a meeting at the Institute of Government at UNC. Air conditioning in municipal vehicles was still considered a luxury at the time, a luxury that the taxpayers, who most likely did not have air conditioning in their own cars at the time, would look upon as frivolous and a poor use of their taxes. But I heard that Chief Brannock had an air conditioner in his Chief's car. So I proposed a swap with my new City Manager's car for the time I was away, a period of a couple of days. The Chief was amenable, but he explained that his air conditioning was not too efficient for a long trip. It consisted of a fan that blew over a container of ice in such a manner it came through the passenger compartment heater vents. On a long trip, it would require several stops for emptying the melted ice and replacing it with new ice. This would require either an ice chest in the car trunk and/or several stops to purchase more ice, depending on how hot a day it was. I concluded that my town car's 4/40 air conditioning system (traveling a minimum of 40 MPH with all four windows open) would be over all more effective for my trip. Fortunately by FY 1962-63 more and more municipalities were purchasing cars with air conditioning and during that year the Town Board authorized this former luxury for all new vehicles purchased. The MAPD was the first department of the Town to have a vehicle with factory air, if I remember correctly, No one could complain about police officers patrolling for eight hour shifts having air conditioning, since it increased their effectiveness by making them less susceptible to heat fatigue and discomfort during the latter stage of a shift. And once the citizens better understood that air conditioning was no longer a true luxury, including it in the purchase of non-Police Department vehicles was acceptable also.

The Public Works Department of the Town was the largest department and had the greatest number of diverse responsibilities (civil engineering, traffic engineering, planning coordination, solid waste collection and disposal, street, storm drainage, and sidewalk repair and maintenance, water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, and vehicle repair and maintenance of its own equipment and vehicles. Because of this it offered the most opportunity for organizational, managerial, and operational improvements.

Working with Mr. Doggett, the Public Works Director, we divided the work force into the following divisions, Engineering, Streets, Sanitation, Water and Sewer, and Garage. Each would have a supervisor who would report to Mt. Doggett.

I noted, within the first week, that there was a lot of clutter at the Public Works Department operations center, where the equipment was stored and the Public Works Department employees, except for the water and sewage treatment plants' staffs, started and ended each day. I told Mr. Doggett that I believed that the facility needed a good straightening and cleaning, and that a period at the end of a work day in the next week should be reserved for taking care of that problem. So shortly thereafter, late in a work day the entire available Public Works Department staff went over the facility, removing accumulated debris and broken items, and dusting, cleaning and straightening out. Scrap metal was sold and other debris was taken to the Sanitary Landfill. When the staff was done, the operations center looked much cleaner and more orderly, a place the personnel could begin to take pride in. Plans were then made to paint those portions of the outside and inside of structures at the operations center, and when this was accomplished over the next 30 days, the Public Works Department staff could be proud to show off the facility.

I next reviewed all the vehicular equipment of the Public Works Department. Mr. Doggett, despite past budgetary limitations had all such equipment in the best possible mechanical shape. The problem that stood out to me was the appearance. Because of past budgetary limitations, such problems including body dents and dings, faded paint, rust areas, worn and torn upholstery and mats in vehicle cabs and other appearance problems, projected a poor image of the Town's public works operations. Working with Mr. Doggett and Mr. Hill the Finance Director, funds were found to resolve a great number of the vehicular equipment defects over the next several months.

Part of the Comprehensive Plan for the Town was the Long Range Capital Improvements Plan. Replacements and additions to the vehicular fleet of the

Town were among the items that would be included in that plan component. Working with Mr. Doggett, I made sure that the Public Works Department vehicular equipment inventory would be brought up to an effective standard over the next five years. When I left after almost 22 months, the vehicular equipment of the Public Works Department could have already made an impressive parade. I believed strongly that good facilities and equipment that looked good were a morale booster for the Town's employees, a boost to service effectiveness, and a reassurance to the citizens of Mt. Airy that the Town's employees were taking good care of their facilities and equipment.

Mr. Doggett was the most responsible municipal employee I had ever worked with. He was so responsible, that I inadvertently almost wore him out in my first couple of months on the job. As service requests and complaints relating to public works operations came across my desk, I would relay them to Mr. Doggett, along with other tasks I had assigned to the Public Works Department. Knowing Mr. Doggett's professionalism, I assumed that he would assign priorities and time limits for the resolution of the work I passed on to his department, without my having to mention any deadlines. But I soon found out that Mr. Doggett believed any service request or complaint that I personally passed on to him was to be resolved as quickly as possible. In short order I learned that Mr. Doggett was resolving what I believed to be five day issues in less than one day, even if it meant doing so with an extraordinary burst of energy, both personal and organizational. So, I quickly started to present guidelines for the length of time I expected the resolution of a particular matter, thereby not overly stressing either Mr. Doggett or the resources of the Public Works Department.

The Town of Mt. Airy's Public Works Department had a unique distinction in the State of North Carolina, that of qualifying for the use of dynamite on a regular basis. The N C Granite Corporation's quarry was not the only location in town where one could find granite deposits a foot or two below the surface of the ground. This factor presented unique problems for the Town's Public Works Department in the installation of water distribution and wastewater collection lines. Mr. Doggett was licensed to use dynamite, and periodically, a situation would arise where this was necessary. Few long

time citizens of the town gave much thought to an occasional resounding "Boom!" of dynamite exploding, but it was often disconcerting to newcomers and visitors to town. And dynamite, fuses, and explosion protection mats were not something that I had heretofore expected to see in operating budget requests.

On occasion, someone would complain to my office about damage caused by the Town's use of dynamite. Mr. Doggett would then meet with the complainant and explain why in all likelihood, the Town's use of the dynamite was not the cause of the alleged damages. One time during my tenure in Mt. Airy, an elderly lady from one of the old families in Mt. Airy was very upset because she noticed some cracked windows in her family home shortly after she heard a dynamite blast. To see how Mr. Doggett handled such complaints, I accompanied him to the home of the complainant. She was still visibly upset over the situation, but at the same time was pleased to have two town officials come to visit her. After making small talk for a few minutes and turning down an offer to have some tea, Mr. Doggett asked her to show us the cracked windows. He reassured the elderly lady that the Town would pay to have the windows in question replaced, if indeed the Town was at fault. Upon viewing the windows in question, it was obvious even to me that the cracks had been in the windows for some time. Over a period of several years, grime had invaded the cracks, outlining them sharply. Mr. Doggett politely but firmly pointed that fact out to the complainant. While disappointed to learn that the Town would not be replacing any of her cracked windows, she was pleased to have the opportunity to have gentlemen visitors come calling to help her resolve a problem. It certainly made the day interesting and purposeful for her. Both Mr. Doggett and I understood that the attention she received that day was much more important to her than who might pay for the replacement of the cracked windows. The experience taught me that things are not always what they seem with regard to a complaint. Both Mr. Doggett and I left the lovely old house feeling good about having made a citizen's day.

Somehow, during the 1930's depression era, a park was built for the Town some distance from the existing Town Limits. The Town over the years could not afford to operate and maintain it or provide security at it. In 1961 it was

a liability to the Town because of the site being primarily used for an illegal dump and for illegal and immoral purposes, which placed the Town in a questionable position for liability of the results of those activities, should someone decide there was a profitable civil suit in doing so.

Basically the abandoned park site was esthetically attractive, with gently rolling land covered by a variety of mature trees. How could the Town turn the liability of the park site as it was into an asset. After discussing the problem with Mr. Dogget and Sam Spencer, City Engineer and Planning Coordinator, I suggested that the Town might have a profitable subdivision in that site. The Town Attorney and his assistants looked at this possibility from the legal standpoint and found nothing in the State Statues or the legal documents deeding the land to the Town in the 1930s that would prohibit the Town from developing the site as a subdivision and selling lots at public auction, once the Town Board formally declared it surplus to the Town's needs.

Sam Spencer using original records of the park site, laid out a proposed subdivision and costed out its development from the Town's standpoint. The Town would have to construct the interior streets and pave them, as well as make sure that storm drainage would be effective through storm drain piping and open land channeling. Water and wastewater service would have to be provided. I remember we talked about extending water and wastewater lines to the site so that these facilities would be in place at such time as the Town might annex the subdivision at some time in the future, but I am not sure in the final analysis if that was done, or it was determined that the lots would be able to accommodate wells and septic tanks.

Once Sam had worked out the details of designing the subdivision and costing out such development, Mr. Doggett, Sam and I agreed that the Town could develop a first class subdivision that would be an asset to the Mt. Airy community and a windfall source of revenue for the Town. It was now time to take the concept to the Town Board for its approval in principal and to declare the land surplus to the Town's needs, so that the lots could be sold at public auction. The Town Board was very pleased that the three of us had

come up with a way to turn a Town liability into a community asset and bring in unanticipated revenue to the Town to boot.

With the Town Board's approval, the former park land was declared surplus. The subdivision plans were approved by the Town Planning Board, as were the plans for the streets by the NC Department of Highways, which would be responsible for street maintenance once the subdivision improvements were completed. Sam, with Mt. Dogget's authorization, utilized Public Works Department personnel and equipment as available to develop the subdivision on the ground. The only work that needed to be contracted out was the electrical distribution work to Duke Power Co. and the street paving to an area contractor.

After all the subdivision improvements were in place and the lots clearly marked, a public auction was held on the sale of the lots, and the Town not only recouped its investment, but established a new source of revenue.

While serving in Mt. Airy, the existing Public Works Department Shop, where vehicle maintenance and repair was accomplished, along with the storage of small item public works supplies, burned down. With a minimum loss to the Town, it presented an opportunity to construct a replacement, a public works operations center that would have room, not only for effective vehicle maintenance and repair operations, but for effective office space for the senior Public Works Department staff and improved storage space for small item supplies for the department.

Financing of the extension of water distribution and wastewater collection lines was reviewed. Upon the recommendation of Mt. Doggett and myself, it was determined by the Town Board that the fairest way to finance such extensions, would be to assess the adjoining property owners the pro-rata share of the expense of a standard sized line (6" for water, 8" for wastewater) according to the number of lot front feet, with the Town picking up the expense for the difference in lines larger than standard and for the footage through intersections. A Water and Sewer Assessment Revolving Fund was established by the Town Board to pay out the costs of

line installation and to receive the annual assessment payments from the adjacent property owners.

A related policy adopted by the Town Board, upon recommendation of Mr. Doggett and myself was the revamping of the water and sewer tap fees and water meter installation fees for new water and sewer line service connections to cover the actual labor and material costs of such operations. This relieved the Town's Water and Sewer Operating Budget of having to subsidize such operations, thereby more fairly applying the cost.

Water and sewer revenues were also increased through a program of replacing inoperable water meters with fully functional water meters, thereby making sure that each customer paid for the actual water used and the wastewater discharged, rather than being charged an estimated "average" bill based upon usage prior to the water meters becoming inoperable. In conjunction with this program, all working water meters were set up on a testing and replacement program, since after so much water passed through a water meter it started to shortchange the Town by recording less than the actual amounts flowing through the meter.

Several street improvement projects, as well as water and wastewater system improvement projects were accomplished in Mt. Airy, while I served there, adding to my sense of accomplishment.

All the projects I worked on during my stay in Mt. Airy could not have been accomplished without the newspaper coverage that kept the citizens of the town informed as to what was going on. While many of my fellow city manager colleagues had an uneasy relationship with the print media, and preferred to only provide information about what was going on when there was no alternative, I, being the son of a former city hall beat reporter, took a different view of the print media. It was my belief that solid and well written news stories opened a channel of information between the municipal government and the citizens of the community and did it at no cost to the municipality. So I welcomed the reporters for the two then weekly

newspapers in Mt. Airy, the Times and the News, as well as the daily newspapers in Winston-Salem, which covered anything of significance that was happening in Mt. Airy.

Telling the reporters about my father and the knowledge of municipal print media relations I had gained from observing his work at the City Hall in Grand Rapids, Michigan put the reporters at ease and allowed me to work with them effectively.

However, to make sure that neither the Town nor the newspapers were put in a awkward position, I established some guidelines. First, I would serve as the point of contact for the newspaper reporters for other than routine Police Department and Fire Department activity reports (arrests, fire report data, etc.) If the reporters needed to contact a department head for additional information on something I had brought to their attention, I would arrange it. Second, the news of Town activities would be released as logical, with no arranging for release to favor one paper's deadline over another. Third, I would provide background information on impending events, as long as the reporter would honor my request not to break the story until the event was a certainty. Fourth, I would suggest feature story concepts about Town of Mt. Airy operations, so that the reporters would have the opportunity to use them for slow news days, when there were more ads that needed to be placed than there was hard news. Once the reporters were sure I would be of professional assistance to them, they were happy to cooperate with the Town government. It was a win-win situation with the Town's citizens being the biggest winners.

While at first, there was occasional skepticism about my open treatment of the media, the Town Board members and my fellow municipal employees soon saw the value of the Town working with the news media to better keep the citizens informed as to what was going on with their municipal government.

Booklets on the municipal government organization and responsibilities and on the Town's service policies, "Know Your Town Government" and "Welcome to Mt. Airy" were also published for the purpose of providing information to the citizens of the community.

After about 18 months service with the Town of Mt. Airy, I believed I had accomplished much to lay the foundation for a more effective municipal government operation for Mt. Airy. The citizens and the Town Board of Commissioners had been most gracious in accepting the changes in organization, management, and operations I had put forth. Few municipalities in North Carolina or elsewhere could match the progress that the Town of Mt. Airy had made in that time period.

While I had become a true admirer of Mt. Airy and its citizens and recognized that it was a town with a very special charm, I could become very attached to, I believed that I had accomplished a good unit of work that laid a sound foundation for the community. It was now time for a period of digestion of all the projects completed and underway. This, being realistic, could probably be better accomplished by a City Manager with qualifications different than mine, one who would not have to carry the baggage I had accumulated by making so many necessary changes in organization, management, and operations. From a personal standpoint for me and for my family, it would have been more attractive to stay in this community we had become attached to. But professionally, for the good of Mt. Airy and its new form of government and for my own career well being, it was time to look at moving on.

The City of Thomasville, NC announced it was looking for a new City Manager to replace the incumbent, who had moved back to his Virginia roots. Thomasville, while not having the special charm that Mt. Airy had, would be a professional step forward for me to a community over twice the population of Mt. Airy and twice the number of municipal employees. It was also a community in need of a city manger with my talents for conducting a comprehensive internal organization and management study to identify needs and then taking the steps necessary to resolve such needs.

I submitted my application to Thomasville for the position of City Manager and after a much quicker time of consideration of my and other applications for the position, the City Council of Thomasville invited me to accept the position there.

So, with mixed emotions about leaving the many friends and neighbors and fellow employees of the Town, I moved on to Thomasville in mid-January 1963, about 21.5 months after arriving. I took comfort in knowing I had done much to help the Town of Mt. Airy prepare to become even a better community than it already was. And I took further comfort in the feeling that I would always have a warm place in my heart for the community, and maybe someday I would come back to Mt. Airy to again enjoy its special charm.

Over the years since 1963, I often visited Mt. Airy for both professional and personal reasons. In 1986, I married my second wife, Linda G. Wright who had a professional connection to Mt. Airy as the Director of the Northwestern Regional Library system, just outside the Mt. Airy city limits at the home of Tommy Golding, who officiated as a Magistrate, in his lovely back yard. A few years ago, after looking in many areas of North Carolina for a retirement home site, we chose Mt. Airy, and we purchased a most attractive building lot on Folly Farms Circle. While we will not be moving permanently to Mt. Airy until the fall of 2007, we plan to build a home on our lot in 2003, and use it for long weekends and vacation periods in the meantime. We are looking forward to coming "home."

Peter F. Lydens
Charleston, WV
September 2001