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Mayor Pro Tem, Mancos, Colorado
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WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF AS AN ELECTED OFFICIAL, AND WHAT DO YOU STILL HOPE TO ACHIEVE BEFORE YOU LEAVE OFFICE?

My first time in office, I wrote and presented the first Three Mile Plan adopted by the Town of Mancos. It's a document required by state law prior to any annexation. We had someone who wanted to annex, and the town didn't have a budget to hire someone to write the plan, so I did it gratis. I'm proud to have participated in the hiring of our current Town Administrator, Heather Alvarez. She's amazing, direct, frugal, honest and has assembled a fantastic staff. I'm constantly amazed and thrilled at how much they accomplish.

I'm proud that our Board works together in a nonpartisan way to do the best we can for the town. Together with staff, we keep the operating budget balanced while also paving some streets; updating our various master plans, land use and town codes; updating our water and wastewater systems; and replacing our 100+-year-old bridge over the Mancos River.

We partner with the local Chamber of Commerce Board to determine ways in which we can support the local business community. After a local artist proposed an outdoor mosaic for Boyle Park in 2017, I suggested a funded public art line item beginning in our 2018 budget. We partner with the Mancos Art District to process and approve proposals on an annual basis. I'd like to see that program expanded, so we continue to beautify Mancos while supporting our local artists in a tangible way.

I support installing stormwater/drainage infrastructure, the eventual paving of our streets and adding curb/gutter/sidewalks to increase accessibility and improve our air quality. Also, we're increasing watershed protection for our water supply, the intake for which is located out of town.

As a Girl Scout, we learned to always leave things better than how we found them. I sincerely hope that I've accomplished this during my time serving the town and people of Mancos.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING YOUR COMMUNITY?

The biggest challenge we face is ensuring that Mancos officials and staff include and represent all people in our town. We continually work on inclusion and accessibility to our buildings, parks, and website. We're trying to increase the visibility of local indigenous people and their heritage, and not just focus on the history of white settlers. Participating in regular joint meetings with tribal and other local governments helps increase our understanding of each other and a wide variety of regional challenges. Housing costs/prices are skyrocketing locally, so creating attainable workforce housing is critical. We recently limited the number and ownership of short-term rentals in town to keep more units in long-term rentals and are supporting various groups with attainable housing projects.

Without hi-speed internet, it's difficult for "clean" businesses to come to Mancos, so we add infrastructure as we work on our rights-of-way. Staff seek many different funding sources to plan and complete projects such as the Path to Mesa Verde, which will connect the town of Mancos to Mesa Verde National Park, and eventually we hope the trail will connect all the way to Cortez. These efforts will increase visitors and potentially businesses in Mancos.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE CONSIDERING RUNNING FOR OFFICE FOR THE FIRST TIME?

Oh, this is a great question! I'd recommend they be prepared to be objective, to spend time outside of meetings on town business, to say no – even if it's a friend. Please don't run just to "fix" one pet peeve – ask yourself if you can work with the other elected officials on all the other topics the Board votes on. Albert Einstein once said, "The leader is one who, out of the clutter, brings simplicity... out of discord, harmony... and out of difficulty, opportunity." We need to remember that we serve all people in our jurisdiction, not just our friends and business associates. In small communities especially, it's helpful to remember what "hat" you're wearing at any given time.

I also think it's important to attend public meetings for at least a year before you run to observe how the board works, how meetings are run, what current projects and issues are, etc. It's helpful to disagree without being disagreeable. We can't promise certain actions, because we're just one person on a board, and everyone on the board has a vote. Sometimes you'll be outvoted, and you'll need to be okay with that, support the board's decisions, and continue to work together.

IS THERE A CONSERVATION, CLIMATE OR DEMOCRACY-RELATED RULE, POLICY OR IDEA YOU'D LIKE TO SEE IMPLEMENTED AT THE LOCAL, STATE AND/OR NATIONAL LEVEL?

All of them?! Seriously, we only have one planet. We need to do everything we can to increase its longevity and viability. I support water conservation, protecting our watershed, aquifers, and freshwater supply. We implemented higher base water rates to offset increased costs and to encourage conservation. I love green lawns, but I really think converting to xeriscaping is a good way to use less water. Plants native to the area



typically use far less water and are harder than those coming from elsewhere. We also need to support better management of our forests, so they aren't congested fire traps; we're slowly recovering from decades of poor forestry and fire management policies.

JUNE IS PRIDE MONTH. WHAT CAN LOCAL LEADERS AND GOVERNMENTS DO TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY AND PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS?

Through our policies and interactions with staff and the public, ensure that all people are treated with respect and dignity. We need to support and approve June Pride Month proclamations.

Simon Sinek said, "Leadership is not about being in charge; it's about taking care of those in your charge." Opinions and/or beliefs about the queer community don't matter. Behavior matters. If you see someone being teased or threatened, intervene. If you hear someone making disparaging remarks about the queer community, tell them to stop. Let people know that hate isn't acceptable in our communities. Why does speaking up matter? Having at least one accepting adult can reduce the risk of a suicide attempt among LGBTQ+ young people by 40%.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 10 to 24; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are at significantly increased risk. LGBTQ youth are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers. The [Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#) found that 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth.

IS THERE ANY MESSAGE YOU'D LIKE TO IMPART IN CELEBRATION OF PRIDE MONTH?

Celebrate safely! Rainbows and unicorns are cute, but remember that we're celebrating the successful June 28, 1969, protest in New York City against police harassment and social discrimination directed at the queer community. Google the Stonewall Riots. We've come a long way since then and still have far to go.

