

JOE WARDY

www.elpasounited.com

400 Montana • El Paso, Texas 79901

joewardyformayor@sbcglobal.net

915.351.8270

Fax: 351.8299



Dear Friend and Fellow El Pasoan,

As the time draws near for voting to begin and we pull into the home stretch of the City Elections, I write again to thank the many thousands who have participated in various ways and to report on what I have learned from you, the voters. I am especially indebted to those who have taken the time to communicate with me their ideas, suggestions, concerns and positions on the important issues they believe need to be addressed when the new Council takes office in early June.

I have done my best to relate who I am and why I seek to serve the public as Mayor in my two previous written communications, at hundreds of public appearances, and with my web site www.elpasounited.com. You have responded generously with letters, cards, e-mails, phone calls, in personal visits at your homes and businesses, and at forums -- letting me know what you think, and how you believe the quality of life in our City can be improved and public expense contained.

I have learned that our citizens believe the biggest problem facing El Paso is the lack of jobs and the need to attract new businesses. The second major concern you identified is our city's current water crisis and the lack of focused planning that substantially contributed to its severity. You also made it clear that you support spirited public debate, but that you strongly oppose a council that cannot harmonize its differences into effective policy decisions. You see these issues as basic to the success of our community and you want them resolved on a high priority basis.

I have also learned that you definitely expect your Mayor and City Council to commit the funds necessary to bring both the fire and police departments up to full strength instead of allowing the current shortage of hundreds of officers and firefighters to continue or grow. Much to your disapproval, the current Mayor has forced the fire department to operate 200 firefighters short of a full force, and with only 12 ambulances for our entire city.

I learned that you have high expectations for a fully manned police and fire department, that you reject the Mayor's policy of operating the fire department 200 firefighters short of its full strength, and an ambulance service that is under equipped and unable to meet national minimum response times (currently the entire city has only 12 ambulance vehicles). You are not impressed with the Mayor's recent substantial pay increases for top police administrative personnel when the department is 280 officers below its manning table. An undermanned police and firefighter force is dangerous both for the officers in the field and the public they serve and protect.

You expressed strong reservations about the Mayor's refusal to allow the police and fire departments to hold training academies to make ready a suitable force of trained personnel to complete their respective manning tables. And, you are deeply concerned about the Mayor's threat to make substantial reductions in all emergency service budgets. Our men and women in the field have told me that they believe the Mayor is off course on issues of public safety.

You strongly desire the City to rearrange its spending priorities to free up funds for resurfacing and drainage improvements to neighborhood streets. And families with children are in great need of improved and expanded neighborhood parks, soccer fields and baseball diamonds.

And, it was no surprise to learn that an overwhelming majority of voters strongly oppose the practice of the current Mayor in creating long-term debt *without voter approval* in violation of a century-old tradition of having bond elections for approval of public debt. In the last 12 months alone, the Mayor has sent the city on a borrowing spree in excess of \$80 million in non-voter-approved long term public debt. Even more troubling are the purposes to which these funds are being committed without voter knowledge or approval. For example, just a few weeks ago the Mayor achieved approval to spend \$500,000 on a feasibility study for moving the downtown rail yards and another \$1,000,000 for studies related to the downtown business district. Worse yet, he passed over qualified engineering firms in El Paso and gave the work to a Houston company in contravention of the city's long-standing commitment to "buy local." Only last week another \$1.5 million of non-voter approved public debt funds were appropriated to buy property for which there was no well-defined purpose.

You also have told me that you were disappointed that the Mayor, promising in his campaign not to raise property taxes, pushed through the largest property tax increase in recent memory as his very first priority after taking office. Ignoring the pleas of the downtown business community and the hotel-motel association, he persuaded council to double the parking meter rates and to substantially increase what was already one of the highest hotel – motel tax rates in the country. Yet in spite of these dramatic increases in revenues, the Mayor was unable to balance this year's budget without using a substantial portion of the city's reserve fund balances.

The strongest negative message I have received from you, the voters, during this past three months of campaign is your deep reservations about the Mayor's determined plans to spend upwards of \$1 Billion in tax dollars to re-vitalize our city's downtown.

He wants a new arena downtown;¹ he wants to remove the rail yards to make room for a small urban park next to one of the busiest interstate highways in America, on a piece of ground that is perhaps the most polluted anywhere in the city .

He wants to issue \$110 million non-voter approved revenue bonds to build a heritage theme park; and he wants to establish a light rail system to Juarez (a project he routinely announces is already a "done deal").

None of these projects will be submitted to the voters for their approval. The Mayor will seek federal funding (remember the U.S. government is facing the largest deficit in history) and if the federal funds are not available, he will pay for the projects with long term debt that is not approved by the voters (the process goes by the harmless sounding name of "certificates of obligation" -- in other words, he obligates you pay!)

In the meantime, the Mayor weakened the city's economic development efforts by ending economic incentives designed to encourage existing businesses to expand and new businesses to move to El Paso. He

¹ A similar proposal by the County for an Arena at Ascarate Park was defeated at the polls last November.

refused to join in the Chamber of Commerce's economic development efforts. When the former director of the City's Department of Economic development resigned, the Mayor left the position vacant for over a year. When the position was finally advertised, approximately 35 persons applied for the job, many of them El Pasoans, but the Mayor refused to interview a single one of the applicants, ignored virtually every civil service rule and recruited an applicant from Virginia *who admitted publicly that he had no experience in economic development*. Adding to the mounting morale problems among city employees, he started this new employee at a salary of \$116,000.00, with special pension benefits enjoyed by no other career city personnel!

In contrast to this review of the Mayor's record, my candidacy offers you, the voters, something very different. I take my bearings here from one of our 20th century's greatest presidents, Woodrow Wilson, when he said:

“Energy is like the sap in a tree. It rises from the bottom.”

During this campaign, you the voters have re-affirmed beliefs that I have held for a long time as a private citizen. Together we believe that public policy must not be dictated from the top down but rise from the united best thinking of an engaged community. It is your vision that will set our course – not mine!

My policy priorities have their source in what you have taught me is the “spirit of our time.” You and I want the city to steer a new course that will put neighborhoods and basic city services at the top of the council's agenda. We believe in taking care of the basics – repairing our streets and drainage problems, improving lighting, providing adequate police patrols and a fire and emergency service department that meet national standards, ensuring a dependable and sufficient water supply, vigorously enforcing zoning and ordinances intended to protect neighborhoods from urban sprawl and deterioration, enhancing existing parks and creating more open spaces for children and adults to use for recreational purposes, especially baseball and soccer fields for our youth. And what better way to enhance our prospects for economic development than improving the quality of life in our neighborhoods?

Most importantly, I oppose the practice of borrowing money without voter approval. Like you, I believe that the voters should approve all long-term debt the old fashioned way with voter consent in a bond election. I do not believe that the City or any other government should issue certificates of obligation and spend it as if on a shopping spree with someone else's money.

In my door to door campaign I have meet hundreds of senior citizens living on fixed incomes. You have told me that you cannot sustain the annual creep of rising property taxes. And I have listened. If I am elected mayor, I will exhaust the limits of the possible before considering any type of tax increase. Homeowners pay too much already.

As for the public projects currently proposed, such as the arena and the amusement park, I will support them if and only if there is a substantial commitment from private capital investment and if voters approve the use of public funds before they are committed.

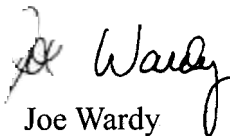
Lastly, I am a consensus builder, I believe in majority rule and majority involvement. I am confident that I can work with all city representatives whom *you* send to City Hall and I will treat all city officials and employees with respect at all times. As for those brave souls willing to take time off from work and from their personal business to attend council meetings to address issues of public concern, I will treat them with the utmost courtesy and deference. City Council must be a place of decorum and civility.

Voters, I have listened to you carefully. I decided early on that my campaign would not be about promises of what I can do for you, but rather about my commitment to fulfill the expectations of a community united in its determination to be better than it has been. If I have not heard from you yet, please drop a line or email message when you have a moment – your words of encouragement and support keep me grounded and motivated!

Early voting begins on Wednesday, April 16, 2003. The official Election Day is Saturday, May 3, 2003. In our last city election only 22% of the registered voters turned out to cast their ballots (about 65,000). You would do me a great honor if you could join in my campaign's effort to make this the largest city election turnout in history. Please pick up the phone and call a friend, a neighbor or a co-worker and encourage them to vote.² Tell them that their vote will make a difference. Can anyone have possibly forgotten that the Presidency itself was finally decided by only a few hundred votes in one State? Every vote does count, and let's never forget that!

History will judge us harshly if we fail to rise to the challenges of the present. I've readied myself. United, let's begin!

Respectfully,


Joe Wardy



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MY CANDIDACY PLEASE VISIT OUR WEB SITE
WWW.ELPASOUNITED.COM

Ad. Paid for by Wardy Campaign for Mayor, 400 Montana, El Paso, Tex:

If you know someone who is over 65 and cannot make it to the polls, please encourage them to contact the elections department for an absentee mail-in ballot. The phone number for the Elections Department is 546.2154