

LEADING MAN THE COUNTY'S CITY MANAGERS MAKE MIRAMAR'S BOB PAYTON PRESIDENT

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Serving as a city manager can fill up one's time. Just ask Bob Payton who has served in that position for Miramar during the past several months.

Because it is so time consuming, Payton says that he has to set priorities. "My priorities are my Creator, my family and my job," Payton said. "When you get those right, everything falls in place."

Now, Payton has one more responsibility to juggle. He was just elected by his fellow city managers to a one year term as president of Broward County's City Manager's Association, a professional organization uniting managers from municipalities throughout the county.

Payton is proud of his long career in public service. "I started 26 years ago part-time in the city's Recreation department," he remembered. "From there I worked fulltime with the Sanitation Department as a mechanic and supervisor and then with Public Works."

Eventually Payton went on to work as the Assistant Director of Public Works, then spent some time with the Community Services Department as director. He was appointed as Deputy City Manager three years ago and then took over the helm as the city's highest ranking hired official last April.

"I love public service," Payton explained. "I also love business and running a city is like running a business except that the bottom line is a better quality of life for the residents."

Payton said that the best part of his job is working with the business community and helping with community development. He said that he enjoys working to cultivate a broad vision of how the community will develop.

On the other side of the coin, his most frustrating experiences involve overcoming the bureaucracies that, he said, "prevent us from doing things in a timely manner."

"Sometimes the rules and regulations defy common sense," Payton said.

The ethnic diversity of Miramar has been something that Payton said he values and has enjoyed working with.

"We could see it developing back in 1998 and 1999 and we celebrated it," he remembered. Recognizing that the city would become diverse, he said that city officials set out to design plans to keep the community united.

Payton pointed to full-service city centers on the east and west ends of the town and city offices in the middle as a way in which Miramar has reached out to serve all of its residents. “They are like bookends that help unite the city,” he said. “What we have done has helped to keep the city intact.”

Payton identifies economic development as a more difficult issue that he and his colleagues have tried to address. “We know that a city needs to keep an industrial tax base, but that it has to be balanced with other development,” he said.

“If the industrial base lags, a city becomes unbalanced,” he explained. “So, we have tried to develop office and retail space as well as additional housing.”

Payton said that taking business from other nearby cities does not help the area’s total economic growth or balance. “We need to bring more business to Florida,” he said. “That will help us to build a strong workforce.”

The City Manager said that over 7,000 new jobs have been added in Miramar in the past three to four years.

Payton’s hard work in Miramar has paid off in his recent election as president of the city manager’s association.

“The Association is a forum for the discussion of common issues and concerns,” Payton said. “It involves all of the city managers from Broward County as well as people from the county administration.”

Currently, the top issues being discussed by the Association are economic development, education, transportation and regional cooperation in fire-rescue.

His colleagues think that he will do well in the one-year elected post. “Bob is bright, analytical and professional,” said Mike Good, City Manager of Hallandale Beach. “He has been active in the Association and has shown great leadership ability.”

Pembroke Pines City Manager Charlie Dodge agrees with that assessment. “He possesses a great vision and understanding of municipal government,” Dodge said. “He is an excellent choice.”

With this added responsibility, Payton said that he wants to keep his priorities straight. In his spare time, he enjoys riding ATVs and dirt bikes with his son Matthew, 7, and boating with his whole family, which also includes his wife, Kimberly and their daughter, Krista, 4.

Payton said that Kimberly currently works for Miramar’s Fire Department, but would like to spend time as a stay-at-home mother.

Trying to balance work responsibilities and family and church activities can be difficult. “You have to make the time,” he said. “I give priority to my family.”

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