

Mayor's Report for December 2013

Santa Claus came to town and the Monroe County Welcome Center was full of Christmas cheer. Thanks to all throughout the county who volunteered and helped at the welcome center. The Monroe County Welcome Center is a great asset for our county.

I, along with other officials and leaders, attended the Coalition Movement for youth. This is a group of leaders around the county who recognize the various issues facing today's youth, and they actively address those issues by developing strategies to assist and support the young citizens of Monroe County.

We had an information meeting on GIS and how the city can better communicate and disseminate information through the web. The concept is not difficult to understand, but designing and providing ongoing support for the system is far more challenging. If this excites you, and you would like to get involved, please give Paul Ellis or me a call.

I attended the Illinois Municipal League (IML) Board Meeting. The IML is continuing to focus on better ways for local governments to communicate with our elected and appointed officials in Springfield and Washington D.C. We do not have the large amount of funding many political lobbyists control, so we are doing far more at the grass roots level. Without a lot of funding, it takes a lot of time and effort.

The Lighted Christmas Parade gets better every year. The organizers did a great job again this year; the participants once again outdid themselves and "awed" the crowd; and Turner Hall was full of Christmas cheer. Thank you all!

The Southwestern Illinois Flood Prevention District held their monthly meeting. Even though the construction phase of the project has begun, there is still a lot of work to be done.

Legislative issues on the forefront with the Illinois Municipal league: (1) LGDF Direct Deposit – this legislation would prevent the state from depositing state income tax funds due local governments into the state's general revenue fund, which has allowed the state to delay payments properly due the cities; (2) the IML is requesting that cities and counties be restored to the previous 10% share of state income tax collections – when the state increased the income tax rate, it reduced the percentage of funds going to the cities and counties; and (3) for the IML continues to urge the state legislature to address pension reform.

The state still owes the City of Columbia (and its taxpayers) over \$108,000 in past due income tax monies. It is unfortunate that the state continues to avoid its financial responsibilities and puts the burden back on the local community taxpayers. We (the Mayors of the Illinois Municipal League) continue to fight for your tax dollars and against unfunded mandates.

Upcoming events include:

January

30 (7 – 9pm): Small Business Finance Fair – Aunt Maggie’s on Main

February

8 & 9: “Be Our Valentine” event ... lots of great gift, wine & dine ideas for that special someone. Receive a Valentine with sweet discounts & prizes at participating Historic Main Street Columbia retailers.

15 (8am – 1pm) Computer & Electronic Recycling – Dept. of Public Works Parking Lot

3, 10 and 24 (2pm): AARP Tax Aide – Columbia Library

Remember if you are not involved, you are missing out.

Columbia is the “Outstanding Community Volunteerism” 2010 Governor’s Cup Winner. So GET OUT and GET INVOLVED!

If you have any questions, concerns, comments or just want to chat please contact me at 281-7144 ext. 109, khutchinson@columbiaillinois.com or home at 281-5199.

Sincerely,

Kevin Hutchinson, Mayor