

September 30, 2006

Dear Bluff City Citizens:

What a September we have had here in Bluff City Hall!

No doubt you've probably read in the Bluff City Squealer about the employment incident we had with our former Information Technology support person. The former IT guy was convicted of serial murder, which – I'm sure you'll agree – should mean immediate dismissal from employment with Bluff City. We tried to fire him but, surprisingly, the city charter does not allow us to terminate employees who have been convicted of felony crimes. There was a subsequent lawsuit against the city for unlawful termination and our city attorney advised us to settle the suit, which we did. Rest assured the Rainy Day Fund was not depleted.

As a result of this incident, I ordered the Bluff City Human Resources manager to run a police background check on all city employees. The results were a bit alarming. Out of all 147 city employees, we found a total of 23 employees with criminal records. Of these 23 employees, five had serious offenses. This included two police officers convicted of robbery, a firefighter convicted of arson, and two managers convicted of prostitution and forgery (both in the same incident). The other 18 employees were convicted of misdemeanor crimes ranging from safecracking to drunk driving. Yes, the safecracking happened at Bluff City Hall, but no city funds were stolen that we know of.

Since the city work rules don't specifically state that a criminal conviction is a fireable offense, we must retain these employees. Because of this, I have formed a working committee to review each employee's offenses in comparison to their work duties so that we can reassign work duties as necessary. For example, we didn't want a firefighter convicted of arson on regular duty (for obvious reasons!), so we reassigned him to a desk job answering phones. I'm proud to say that the committee successfully reassigned all relevant employee duties as we work through this issue.

I am working with Bluff City Council to craft a solution that stops this issue from being a problem for future city employees. We are reviewing the city charter with the intention of inserting language that will require criminal background checks for all new employees prior to employment. We will also change the charter so that any employees found to be convicted of any criminal offense can be legally terminated from city employment.

On a more positive note, the groundbreaking ceremony for the new downtown parking district took place this month. Stan Stanlovski, our senior manager, was responsible for planning the ceremony. Stan did an admirable job, despite the fact that there was an issue with the ceremonial shovels. As reported in the Bluff City Squealer, the twelve ceremonial shovels were special order chrome plated shovels fitted with special commemorative plaques celebrating the event. These shovels were a tad expensive, but worth the expense.

However, upon closer inspection it was discovered that the ceremonial shovels were made in China. That was completely unacceptable! I sent Stan to Home Depot to buy replacement shovels, which were – unfortunately – not as shiny as the special-order shovels. Home Depot also didn't have twelve identical shovels, so Stanlovski had to buy eight regular shovels and four kid-sized shovels. Needless to say, the four VIPs who had to use the kid-sized shovels were a bit disgruntled. Fortunately, they weren't big campaign contributors.

Now, if we can just get the parking lot paved before the cold weather sets in. Keep your fingers crossed; this is the first step in our grand downtown redevelopment plan!

Sincerely,
Percy J. Brown
Your Honorable Mayor
Of Bluff City