

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
President's Message | Glenn Heran | June 2013

In a recent article, Dick Winger, a City of Vero Beach Councilmember, wrote about his ideas on reorganizing the City Government. The Taxpayers Association found only one point on which we can agree. The City should become more efficient. The rest of his article is dedicated to the idea that the City should stay in the business of big government, something he refers to as "Keeping Vero Vero".

Mr. Winger has a perhaps well-intentioned but mistaken belief that government should be run like a business. Yes, government should be efficient like business but it must not adopt business core commercial tenets. Winger states, "All my years in business, giving customers less equated to forfeiting customer approval and inevitably results in declining profits." However, taxpayers are not customers and we are not here to provide government with a profit.

Customers, profit and maximizing shareholder wealth are private sector concepts. Government should exist to do those things that the private sector cannot do for itself. Thus, government should be limited to providing only those services, which are essential and natural government functions. Locally, these are public safety, roads, parks and zoning, functions, which the private sector cannot effectively deliver.

Mr. Winger believes that the city should offer all the services it currently does even though many of these directly compete with the private sector. "I am willing to bet that we, as a City, are doing 95% of what we do is because the citizens want the services we provide" said Winger. Yes, some may want the service, but to suggest that the government should provide it is mistaken. Perhaps Mr. Winger might want to reflect on some of the ideas of the founding fathers. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, wrote "my reading of history convinces me that most bad government results from too much government."

Mr. Winger cites the City Water and Sewer department "optimization" as an excellent example of American efficiency. He failed to mention that City water and sewer customers pay on average 11% more for the same commodity than that provided by IRCU, hardly a model of competitiveness. Nor did he mention that 20% of the City customers (living in South Beach) are slaves with no representation and pay 22% more for the privilege of receiving City as opposed to County water and sewer services, hardly an American ideal.

So, while we agree that the City must become more efficient, the Taxpayers Association fundamentally disagrees on the size of City government envisioned by Winger. Many business focus on only a few core activities and sub out all ancillary functions. The government could learn from that idea and focus only on the things that are essential for it to do. Sub out all the rest, let the free market provide for itself and increase our share of liberty.

Glenn Heran