A Memoir:
College Station City Council
2007-2011

John L. Crompton
A MEMOIR:
COLLEGE STATION CITY COUNCIL
2007-2011

by
John L. Crompton

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

CHAPTER 1 - REFLECTIONS ON FOUR YEARS ON CITY COUNCIL

Why I served on city council ........................................................................... 1
Keys to being effective as a council member .................................................... 2
  Avoid micromanaging ............................................................................. 2
  Trust and consistency ............................................................................ 3
  Focus on pragmatism not ideology .......................................................... 4
  Substantial life experience .................................................................... 5
  Open-mindedness ............................................................................... 5
  Choreograph issues ........................................................................... 5
  Civility ......................................................................................... 6
Lessons learned ...................................................................................... 7
  Communication: Democracy’s Achilles’ heel ............................................ 7
  Erosion of friendships and support constituencies is inevitable .......... 9
  Expect unrelenting political attacks from extreme opponents ...... 11
  Balancing individual rights with societal values ................................ 13
  Balancing cost cutting with investment in amenities ....................... 14
  Persist to accomplish systemic change ........................................... 16
  Never skip due diligence ................................................................ 19
Conditions necessary to win re-election ...................................................... 19

CHAPTER 2 - NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRITY ........................................... 23

Neighborhood integrity improvements ....................................................... 23
  Code enforcement ........................................................................... 23
  See/click/fix program ...................................................................... 23
  Neighborhood area plans .................................................................. 24
  Neighborhood overlay districts ......................................................... 24
  Animal control ordinance ............................................................... 24
  Historic district overlay ................................................................ 25
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood grants program</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise ordinance</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxicab Ordinance</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood parking</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood input to planning and road decisions</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character zoning issue</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic impact analysis and non-residential landscaping</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Department</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Department</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False Alarm Calls</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wellborn annexation issue</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilization</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insensitive leadership</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expediting the courts’ appeals process</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusal to compromise on proposed boundaries</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance with the Tea Party</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believing in the viability of state intervention</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debating the costs of annexation</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dénouement</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The recall election</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Stewart’s death</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The election to fill Larry Stewart’s council place</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMillan stirs controversy</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The recall process</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northgate</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The parking garage</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pedestrianization of Northgate</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure development</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northgate Park</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with A&amp;M United Methodist Church</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Animal Shelter</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Issues</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellborn Water</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Weingarten case</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Harvey Cargill saga</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental property registration and inspection</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental registration</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rental inspection proposal</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3 – ALLEVIATING TRAFFIC CONGESTION
Road improvements ........................................................................... 113
Road funding ...................................................................................... 114
Traffic light synchronization ................................................................. 118
Airport taxi fare .................................................................................. 118
Red light cameras ............................................................................... 119
Camera operations and revenue disbursements .................................. 120
Rationale for the cameras ................................................................... 123
Rationales of opponents to the cameras ............................................ 124
Increased intrusion of government surveillance .................................. 124
The “rolling stop” ................................................................................. 125
Questionable constitutionality .............................................................. 125
Increased rear-end crashes ................................................................. 126
Revenue generation ............................................................................. 126
Petition and referendum on removal of the cameras ......................... 127

CHAPTER 4 – FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE ACTIONS
Protection of the city’s fiscal strength................................................... 130
Proposed new city hall ......................................................................... 131
Reduction in council members’ expenses ............................................ 132
Transparency in election financing ....................................................... 133
Removal of funding for non-profit organizations................................. 134
Outsourcing parks and road rights-of-way maintenance .................... 135
Results ............................................................................................... 136
Opportunities missed: other potential park efficiency measures .......... 137
Recreation activity revenue accounts ................................................ 137
Increased development review fees and oversized participation contributions ........................................................................................................... 139
Enhanced fiscal transparency ............................................................... 140

CHAPTER 5 – ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY
Green Initiatives ................................................................................... 141
The Brazos Valley Solid Waste Management Agency Conflict ............. 145
Floodplain protection .......................................................................... 152
Conservation easements .................................................................... 153
Recycling .............................................................................................. 153
Multifamily recycling ........................................................................... 153
Hazardous waste ................................................................................ 154
Food waste ......................................................................................... 154
Borrow a recycling bin................................................................. 155
Electricity conservation and infrastructure funding ...................... 155
Prices, revenues and the ROI ...................................................... 155
The deregulation issue ............................................................ 156
Green actions .......................................................................... 157
Underground electricity lines .................................................... 157
Wind power ............................................................................ 158
Solar power ............................................................................ 159
Energy conservation ................................................................ 160
Water conservation and infrastructure funding .......................... 162

CHAPTER 6 – AMENITIES ................................................................. 179
Parks ......................................................................................... 179
Parkland dedication ordinance .................................................. 179
Opening of new parks .............................................................. 181
Tournament fund ...................................................................... 182
The Exit Center ........................................................................ 182
Prioritizing use of athletic fields ............................................. 184
Differential pricing for residents and non-residents .................. 186
Festival site and farmers’ market .............................................. 186
Boot camp fitness programs in parks ...................................... 187
Equipment replacement fund .................................................... 188
The new cemetery .................................................................... 188
PARD and city histories ........................................................... 189
Bicycle and Greenway Trails .................................................... 189
Trees ......................................................................................... 190
Texas Avenue Streetscape ......................................................... 190
East By-Pass 6 and University Avenue Interchange .................... 191
Tree preservation ordinance .................................................... 197
The Wellborn/2818 overpass ...................................................... 202
Northgate trees ...................................................................... 203
Bee Creek trees ...................................................................... 203
Streetscape standards ............................................................. 203
Dartmouth: Krenek Tap Road to Harvey Road ............................ 204
The Arts Council ...................................................................... 204
Annual funding of the Arts ....................................................... 204
The Arts Council Building ......................................................... 205
## CHAPTER 7 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ................................................. 207

**Controversial issues** ................................................................. 207
- Relationship with the Research Valley Partnership .......................... 207
- The College Station Business Advisory Board ................................ 209
- Economic impact study commissioned by the BCS Homebuilders Association ........................................ 210
- Proposed public/private mixed use development .............................. 213

**Major Successes** ...................................................................... 214
- Lynntech Science Park.................................................................... 214
- Scott & White Hospital .................................................................. 215
- First Street block acquisition .......................................................... 215
- Retail developments ...................................................................... 216
- Enhancing the development application process .............................. 216
- Future opportunities ..................................................................... 217

**The convention center and interactions with the CVB** .................... 217
- The Brazos County HOT debate ...................................................... 224
- The CVB Board ........................................................................... 225

**Negotiating the Bio-Medical Corridor Special District** ................. 230
- The immediate potential clients ...................................................... 230
- Complexity of the site .................................................................. 233
- The political complexities .............................................................. 233
- The negotiating process ................................................................. 234

## APPENDIX: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS ............................................. 239

- 2007 - 2008 issues ........................................................................ 240
- 2008 - 2009 issues ........................................................................ 246
- 2009 - 2010 ................................................................................. 260
- 2010 - 2011 ................................................................................. 267
PREFACE

Life is comprised of a collection of experiences. My four years on city council were a wonderful experience. I say that without any connotations of cynicism. Like all the best experiences, it yielded a wide spectrum of emotions: the jubilation of successes and the disappointment of failures; periods of adrenaline rush and of tedium; opprobrium and approbation from citizens; meeting many people with whom I would not otherwise have interacted; interactions with people who had diverse views; new insights into the working of local government; and enhanced knowledge on a wide variety of topics derived from public briefings, interactions with senior managers, and confidential briefings in executive sessions.

The reflections in this document on my council experience are selective, egocentric and idiosyncratic, since they are viewed only from my perspective. The descriptions and observations incorporate my biases. Thus, the document is a personal memoir, rather than an impartial historical account which would require a holistic balanced analysis.

My reason for investing effort in this project is selfish. Writing is an avocation for me, but it is also my primary learning and growth vehicle. These written reflections have facilitated self-analysis and, with the benefit of hindsight, have offered new insights into how I could have better addressed some issues. These lessons are valuable in my professional life in the context of both teaching and consulting.

My four year period was one of the most turbulent and controversial in the city's history. There was an almost continuous string of issues that aroused passions and received substantial publicity. My intellectual capacity, value system and political acumen were fully engaged which added to the richness of the experience - although there were times when I did not appreciate these "opportunities."

The first chapter of this memoir is entitled: Reflections on four years on city council. It provides a macro perspective of the four years. The bulk of the memoir which follows this chapter comprises a description of the accomplishments and failures of agenda items which are arranged under the major themes of my election platforms in 2007 and 2008: Neighborhood Integrity, Alleviating Traffic Congestion, Fiscally Conservative Actions, Ecological Sustainability, Amenities, and Economic Development. Within these six chapters (2 through 7), those agenda items that I considered to be major items are developed as more lengthy case studies which discuss the context and debate associated with them in more detail.