

Mayor Bill Yoss will end his ten-year tenure after this year's election

Written by Betsy Blevins
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In February of 2002, Bill Yoss filed to run for mayor of the City of Leonard and won the election as an unopposed candidate. Only one time in the ten years he has served has he been opposed at the polls - and that was eight years ago. Yoss has said for a handful of years now that he would not run again when a viable candidate showed an interest to fill the Mayor's position. Recently, Willie Johnson - who Yoss had talked to on occasion about this very matter - did just that. Yoss has officially withdrawn himself from candidacy from the Mayoral race, with Johnson and anybody else who files left on the ballot.

When Yoss took the reigns in 2002, the city budget was around \$600,000 per year and now it has grown to \$1,100,000 per year. The population has also grown by 20% in the ten years and several new businesses have opened their doors or remodeled.

Other improvements taking place during his tenure include the addition of several businesses that have branched out or began, including Sonic, Dollar General, Family Dollar, City Auto Parts, Bear Creek Country Store, Florentina's and Circle Star Quick Lube to name a few with Kwik Chek, Leonard Service Center, Lea's Restaurant, Dairy Queen and Crossroads Hardware all making major renovations.

As mayor he has also seen the Leonard Pool revitalized and many park and street improvements have been made. Besides presiding at the monthly city council meetings and other meetings called for the council, Yoss checks in at the city hall each day and most days, twice a day. He takes the deposit to the bank each day as well as checks to see if any documents need his signature. He has also attended meetings in Austin and Dallas that affected life in Leonard and has ridden in the lead car of the Christmas and Leonard Picnic parades. Along with the good comes the bad, and he has seen the City of Leonard lose two great people that were serving on the council at the time of their deaths - Ronnie Cooper, who died suddenly due to health reasons, and Tammy Barnes, who was killed this past November in a car accident.

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In 1981, Bill and Martha Yoss moved to Leonard and bought and ran the Leonard Mercantile store on the west side of the downtown square. He had formerly been a traveling salesman and could tell with the influx of technology that the income and need for this type of provider would be phased out in the coming years. Yoss has a motto, "Always quit while you're ahead," so that is what he did, which presented the move to Leonard as their next source of income.

In 1985, Yoss became the only paid police officer for the City of Leonard and served in that capacity for six years. Yoss had a hobby of leather repair and repaired many a boot or shoe for customers. Even after they closed the Mercantile, he continued to repair boots out of a building behind his house for several years.

"As mayor of Leonard I have been attentive to the duties and enjoyed my tenure as mayor, but feel I am ahead and want to quit while I am ahead," Yoss stated.

Former City Administrator Butch Henderson commented that Yoss was a privilege to work with.

"He was a hands-on mayor. He took the responsibility and time to come to the office twice a day to check on things. He cared deeply for Leonard and the employees of the city. He fully supported the staff, once the city council set a direction for the city, he stood behind the staff in all aspects of city business. He always wanted what was best for the City of Leonard," said Henderson.

Current Councilman Darrell Grintz iterated the same feelings.

"My many years with Mayor Yoss have been enjoyable. He is an avid bird watcher and a man who loves nature. Through our time on the council he has given great leadership, always allowing each individual their own ideas. I believe we are a better town due to his dedication and devotion to the people of this community. He will be greatly missed. I wish him and Martha much happiness in the years to come."